Game of the Month: QUAKE

18 REVIEWS!

PC GAMES

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COMPUTER GAMING

Exclusive

Space Bunnies Must Die!

A Hare-Raising 3D Blast!

Quake Killers

Prey • Unreal • SkyNET

GUIDED TOUR

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Star Trek Borg & Voyager: AN INSIDE LOOK

Grand Prix II

Complete Quake Secrets!

NCAA Championship Basketball

An IDG Communications Publication

October 1996

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FLESH RIPPING,
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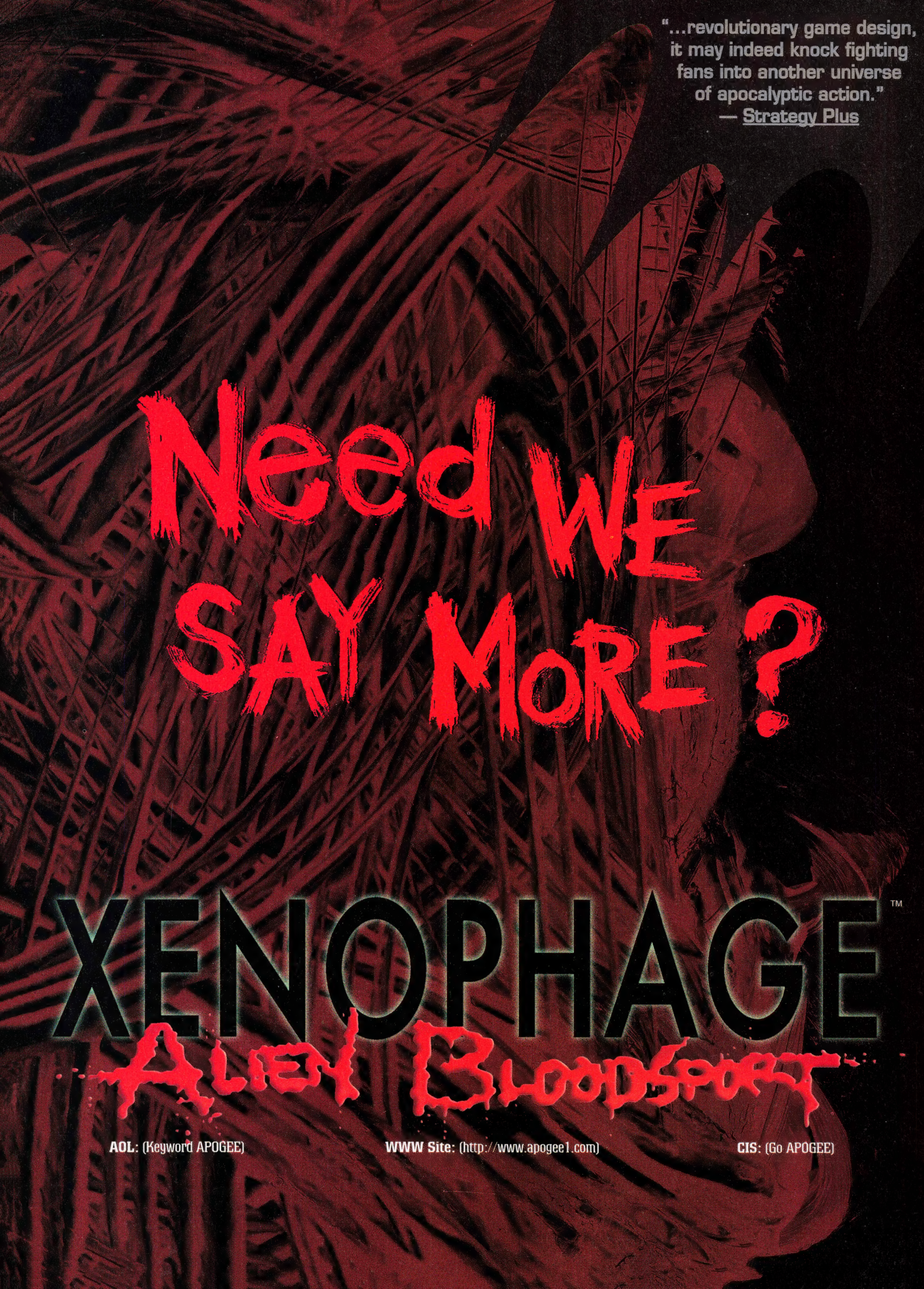
CLAW SLASHING,
TAIL WHIPPING,
KARATE KICKING,
FIST RAMMING,
BODY SLAMMING,
BLOOD SPURTING ACTION...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By far, the largest, most detailed foes ever seen in a fighting game on the PC. Exotic charcters up to 3/4 of the screen's height. Far better than **Mortal Kombat**, **Street Fighter**, **One Must Fall**, **Ressurection**, and every other fighting game.

Each win allows you to advance to the next round.

Customize your matches with several different options, including fighter quickness, auto-blocking off/on, special moves toggle, and a dozen more.

Innovative screen pa
real-time scaling, shado
like those only seen

Lose and your homewo

Spine tingling music by Bobby Prince, (famous for **Duke Nukem 3D** and **DOOM**) with heart stopping sound and voice effects.

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e in the ultimate tournament.

If you are looking for something new and innovative in fighting games, you found it. Special never-before-seen moves, concussion causing combos, resurrections, & humiliations.

nning, zooming,
ows and special FX,
in the arcade.

Rip your friends apart with 2-player head-to-head action at the same computer. Even though one player games are awesome, nothing is more fun than pounding on a friend.

rld is destroyed. Survival *is your only option!*

Eight blood thirsty characters, two bone crushing champions and a nasty surprise that you will never be able to forget.

ARGO GAMES

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"...revolutionary game design, it may indeed knock fighting fans into another universe of apocalyptic action."
— Strategy Plus

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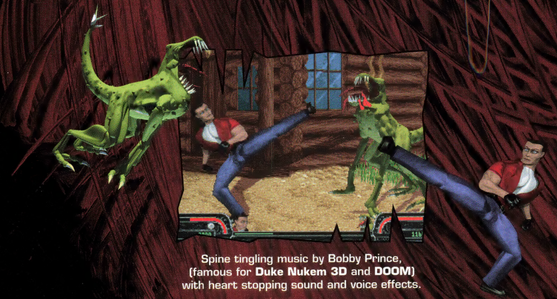
Each win allows you to advance to the next arowna.

Customize your matches with several different options, including fighter quickness, auto-blocking off/on, special moves toggle, and a dozen more.

Innovative screen panning, zooming, real-time scaling, shadows and special FX, like those only seen in the arcade.

Rip your friends apart with 2-player head-to-head action at the same computer. Even though one player games are awesome, nothing is more fun than pounding on a friend.

Lose and your homeworld is destroyed. Survival is your only option!



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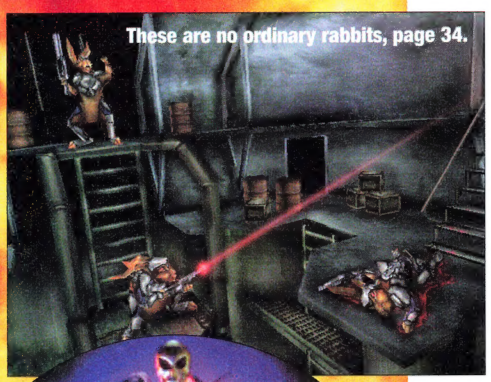
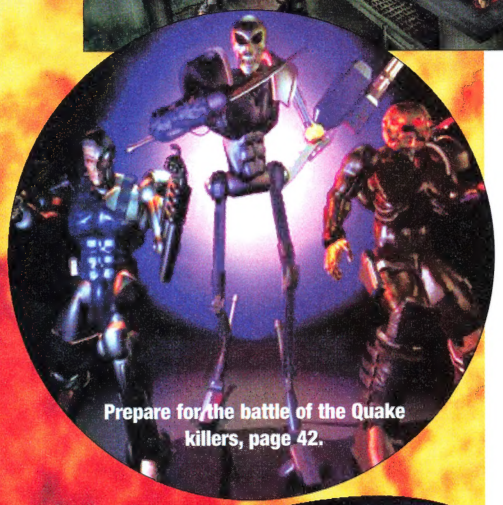
OCTOBER 1996

PC GAMES™

Contents



These are no ordinary rabbits, page 34.



Prepare for the battle of the Quake killers, page 42.

Star Trek games take flight, page 48.

Reinvent yourself in Origin's big-budget sequel to Privateer, page 56.

Features

34 **Space Bunnies Must Die! and Other Truths** COVER STORY

By Steve Klett

How do you top a game that casts you as a cockroach? Bad Mojo–maker Pulse Entertainment has a trio of new ideas—including one that pits you against gun-toting, armor-clad rabbits from outer space.

42 **Quake Killers**

By Rob Smith

Can anything be better than Quake? Apogee, Epic MegaGames, Bethesda Softworks—and even id Software—think so. Get the scoop on Prey, Unreal, SkyNET, and other attempts to break the mold of 3D action games.

48 **Where No Games Have Gone Before**

By Donald St. John and Corey Cohen

Welcome to the Next Generation of *Star Trek* games. *PC Games* takes you behind the scenes of Star Trek: Voyager and Star Trek: Borg.

56 **Guided Tour: Privateer 2**

By Rob Smith

"Who am I?" The sequel to Privateer casts you as a man in search of his identity...and the type of space combat and adventure he'll crave is entirely your call. We'll help you get prepared.

PC GAMES™ VOLUME 3, NUMBER 10

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Reviews

64 **The A List**

Sneak Peek

66 iM1A2 Abrams
68 Eradicator

Game of the Month

72 Quake

Action

76 Virtua Fighter PC
77 Xenophage
78 Z
82 Final Doom

Adventure

83 The Elk Moon Murder
84 Fort Boyard: The Challenge

Fly & Drive

86 Grand Prix II
90 Hoyle Blackjack, Hoyle Solitaire

Role-Playing

92 Albion

Sports

94 Links LS
98 NCAA Championship Basketball
100 FPS: Baseball Pro '96

Simulation

102 Free Enterprise

Strategy

104 Close Combat

Game Shorts

106 Tracer, Sea Legends

Strategy & Tactics

108 Quake revealed! We show you everything in the full version—87 secrets over 22 levels!

116 Cheats for Earthworm Jim 1 and 2, Fire Fight, Quake, Settlers II, Witchaven II, and more!

Departments

6 **Publisher's Note** Gini Talmadge

8 **PC Games CD-ROM**

10 **PC Games Online**

12 **Letters**

16 **Game News**

Pigskin fever, a new era for Wing Commander and Civilization, and Star Talk with *Star Trek*'s Q, John de Lancie.

26 **The Player** Steve Klett

Till death do us part? The Player's not sure if he's cut out to be a one-game man, especially when it comes to choosing between his beloved Duke and hot-number Quake.

30 **Mac Attack** Peter Olafson

Marathon Infinity may be the longest—and best—Bungie game yet. Plus: more PC ports.

144 **Talk Back**

Give us your two cents about 3D—and win a 3D graphics card!

Tech Shop

120 **DSVD Modem Migraines**
Christine Grech Wendin

You say you can't wait for DSVD standards to kick in? Here's what to expect from five early modems that let you talk and play over a single phone line.

124 **1-2-3D Graphics**
David Gerding

With 3D graphics, a picture really *is* worth 1,000 words! Don't worry if you can't keep up with all the tech terminology—we'll explain it in plain English.

128 **Hardware Spotlight**

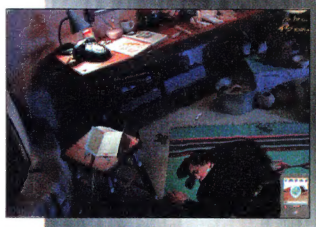
Hands-on reviews of a pair of 128-bit graphics cards, ATI's 3D Expression, and more. Plus: The Hardware Hall of Fame.

134 **S.O.S.** Patrick Marshall

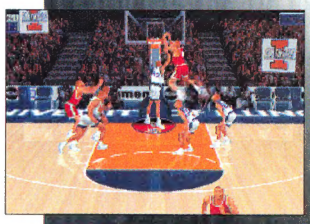
Honest answers to your toughest technical questions.

More memory for your games, page 134.

Xenophage, page 77.



The Elk Moon Murder, page 83.



NCAA Championship Basketball, page 98.

Grand Prix II, page 86.

PLAY the Demo on the disc

SEE MORE Online http://www.pcgamesmag.com

F22
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ARMORED
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Publisher's Page

Gini Talmadge

We're Listening

What do you suppose we spend most of our time thinking about here at *PC Games*? The latest and greatest games, right? Nope. We spend most of our time thinking about you.

We want to know how to best serve our readers. It's the central question at our editorial meetings—it permeates everything we do. And it's something we can't figure out in a vacuum; we need your input, your feedback, your insight, and your requests.

When we launched *PC Games* in June, we started what we hope will be an ongoing reader dialogue with the debut of our Talk Back section. Our inaugural Name Our Disc contest asked you to help us name our monthly demo CD-ROM and give us insights into your purchase plans for new games and hardware. We got lots of great name suggestions—and with this issue, our CD-ROM officially debuts as PCGAMES.EXE! Thanks for all your suggestions, and congratulations to Swedish reader Bo Saurage for his winning entry.

Talk Back helps keep you involved with the evolution of *PC Games* and helps us figure out what issues are most important to you. Our conversation with you continues this month as we ask you what you really think about all the 3D graphics hype. Please take a minute to give us your two cents about 3D—and enter to win a free Diamond Edge 3D card (see "Talk Back," page 144).

We also seek your feedback in our Letters section, which features our new Question of the Month. Here we invite you to comment on such important issues as the escalating hardware requirements for games, Windows 95 as a gaming platform, and whether sex and violence have a place in computer games. This month, tell us what you expect from the games you buy (page 10).

When we launched our PC Games Online Web site in May, we had a great response from visitors, many of whom were kind enough to answer a survey about their Internet habits and other gaming-related questions. These responses will help us create a site that gives you just what you're looking for.

We're also encouraged by what we're hearing about our magazine—via e-mail, PC Games Online, and good old-fashioned letters. The response to *PC Games* is very enthusiastic! You've told us you like our look, our style, and our content, as well as our honest reviews.

Good, bad, or indifferent, your feedback is important to us. So speak up! Please let us know your opinions and what you want from *PC Games*. And keep participating in our contests—we'd like to keep this stuff fun. Meanwhile, we'll do our best to create a magazine that reflects your interests.

Keep in touch,

Gini Talmadge
President & Publisher

Keep talking to us at pcgamesletters@iftw.com, or visit our Web site at **www.pcgamesmag.com.**

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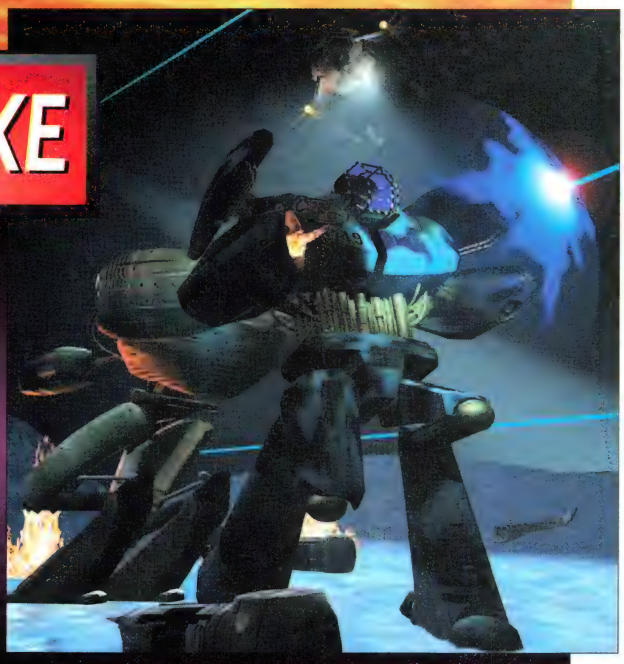
PC GAMES.EXE

DEMO OF THE MONTH

Shattered Steel

Interplay, DOS



This month's featured demo is a hot new Mech game by Interplay Productions. It's the year 2132, and the struggle between good and evil is blazing full-tilt in this intergalactic action game. You've been hired to explore a mining camp on planet Lanios III, where you'll discover a mechanical race with only one goal: to destroy humanity. To save the colony, you must battle the powerful Mechs on their own high-tech terrain, using dual cannons, heat-seeking missiles, and other weapons designed to defeat intelligent enemies with customized fighting machines.

What's on the Disc

Demo of the Month

Shattered Steel (Interplay Productions, DOS)

Action Games

Hellbender (Microsoft, Win 95)

Pray for Death (Virgin Interactive, DOS)

Space Bunnies Must Die! (Pulse Entertainment, Win/Win 95)

Star Fighter (3DO Company, DOS)

Time Commando (Activision, Win 95)

Adventure Games

Harvester (Merit Studios, DOS)

Muppet Treasure Island (Activision, Win/Win 95)

Titanic: Adventure Out of Time (GTE Entertainment, Win/Win 95)

9 (GT Interactive, Win 95)

Brain Drain Games

Chess Mates (Interplay Productions, Win 95)

The Sci-Fi Channel Trivia Game (Byron Preiss Multimedia, Win 95)

Simulation Games

iM1A2 Abrams: America's Main Battle Tank (Interactive Magic, Win 95)

Strategy Games

Close Combat (Microsoft, Win 95)

Patches

Total Mayhem (Eidos Interactive, DOS)

Getting Started

Win 3.1

1. Start Windows.
2. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
3. Select Run from the Program Manager's File menu.
4. Type "d:\install" in the Command Line box and press Enter.
5. Follow onscreen instructions.

Win 95

1. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
2. Wait a few seconds and follow onscreen instructions.

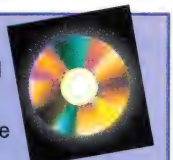
Getting Around

Click on the *PC Games* icon to load the CD-ROM. The Welcome screen lists all of the disc's demos and the platforms you can play them on at a quick glance. Just toggle down with the green arrows to see the complete list. Then click on the Take me to your Demos button to browse the full demo selection.

Clicking on the demo graphic for a game takes you to an information screen that lists the system requirements, order and technical support phone numbers, and a short description. We've even made the ReadMe files instantly available, with an option to print.

From the Info screen, just click on the Play button for demos that run directly from the interface, or click on the Install button for demos that require an installation routine. Each DOS demo has a pop-up screen with installation instructions. You can print this list for easy reference.

If you are a current subscriber and would like to upgrade your subscription to include the CD-ROM–full of playable game demos–with every issue, please contact us at 800-688-4575.



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Adventure 5071600
DOS 486/66 or MAC 68040, 8mb, M, J, K

Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within NEW
Adventure 5060405
WIN3.1 486/33, 8mb, M

Zork Nemesis NEW
Adventure 5065602
DOS 486/66 or MAC 68040, 8mb, M

Command & Conquer NEW
Strategy Game 5050208
DOS 486/66, 8mb, M

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PLUS 1 MORE AT GREAT SAVINGS! (See details below.)

NEW	**Spycraft: The Great Game** DOS 486/66 or MAC 68030, 8mb, M	Adventure	5063201
	Phantasmagoria WIN3.1 486/66 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M	Adventure	5004502
	Mechwarrior 2 DOS 486/66 or MAC 68040, 8mb, M	Arcade Style	5043609
	Instant Internet Access WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M	Internet Guide	5031000
	McKenzie & Co./Games For Her WIN3.1 486/50, 8mb, M	Adventure	5052808
NEW	**Zone Raiders** DOS 486/50, 8mb, J, K	Arcade Style	5058904
	Hexen DOS 486/33 or MAC 68040, 8mb, M	Arcade Style	5056403
NEW	**TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri** DOS Pentium, 8mb, M	Arcade Style	5066600
	PTS Official Windows '95 Tutorial WIN3.1 386/33, 4mb, M	Computer Tutor.	5043807
	Aces Collector's Edition WIN3.1 486, 4mb, M	Flight Sim.	5037908
	1001 Really Cool Web Sites WIN3.1 386 or MAC Class, 4mb, M, K	Internet Guide	5053004
NEW	**Flight Unlimited** DOS 486/66 or MAC PMAC/66, 8mb, M, J, K	Flight Sim.	5070800
	Nascar Racing DOS 386/40 8mb, M, J, K	Driving Sim.	5001300
	Police Quest: Open Season DOS 386, 4mb, M, J, K or MAC LC, 8mb, M	Adventure	5002803
NEW	**Star Trek Deep Space Nine: Harbinger** DOS 486/66, 8mb, M	Adventure	5072608
	King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride WIN3.1 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Arcade Style	5024401
	Resume Maker Deluxe CD WIN3.1 386/33, 8mb, M, P, K	Home/Personal	5050703
NEW	**Official Guide To Netscape Navigator** WIN3.1 486, 4mb or MAC LCII, 8mb, M	Computer Tutor.	5061908
NEW	**Trophy Bass Fishing** WIN3.1 486/66 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M	Arcade Style	5054101
	Corel Gallery WIN3.1 386, 4mb or MAC LCIII, 2mb, M	Clip Art Library	5010301
	The Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed DOS 386/33, 4mb, M, J, K	Arcade Style	5044409
	Trivial Pursuit WIN3.1 386 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Strategy Game	5027404
	Pool Champion WIN3.1 486/66, 8mb, M, J, K	Arcade Style	5060306
	7th Guest DOS 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Interact. Game	5004700
	Casper Brainy Book WIN3.1 486, 4mb or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M	Children's Ed. For ages 4–8	5048905
NEW	**JAVA Programmer's Library** WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M	Internet Guide	5077200
	Jumpstart Kindergarten WIN3.1 386, 1mb or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Children's Ed. For ages 4–6	5027701
NEW	**Mastercook Deluxe** WIN3.1 386/25 or MAC II, 4mb, M	Home/Personal	5052709
	Doom II DOS 386/33 or MAC LCII, 4mb, M, J, K	Arcade Style	5021506
NEW	**Picture Perfect Golf** WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M, J, K	Sports	5054200
	Shivers WIN3.1 486/33, 8mb , M	Adventure	5058102
NEW	**Police Quest: SWAT** WIN3.1 486/33, 8mb, M	Adventure	5062500
NEW	**Mission Critical** DOS 486/33, 4mb, M	Adventure	5062807
	The Lost Mind Of Dr. Brain WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Children's Ed.	5037502
NEW	**Just Me & My Dad** WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Children's Ed.	5067400
	Compton's Encyclopedia WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M	Gen. Reference	5046008
	Beer Hunter WIN3.1 486 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Gen. Interest	5040803
NEW	**Connections** WIN3.1 486/33 or MAC 68040, 8mb, M	Adventure	5071501
	Print Artist 3.0 WIN3.1 386/25, 4mb, M, K, P	Home/Personal	5051404
	Navy Strike DOS 486/66, 4mb, M, J, K	Flight Sim.	5051909
	Screamer DOS 486/66, 8mb, M, J, K	Arcade Style	5058805
NEW	**Dinotopia** DOS 486/66, 8mb, M	Adventure	5063003
	FX Fighter DOS 486/33, 4mb, M	Arcade Style	5045109
	Caesar II DOS 386/40, 8mb, M	Strategy Game	5068606
	Outpost WIN3.1 386, 4mb or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M, K	Strategy Game	5007703
NEW	**Angel Devoid** DOS 486/66 or MAC LCII, 8mb, M	Adventure	5065404
	The Daedalus Encounter WIN3.1 486/33 or MAC LCIII, 8mb, M	Adventure	5034707
NEW	**William's Arcade Classics** Arcade Style 5072400 DOS 486/33, 4mb, M		
NEW	**Heretic** Arcade Style 5066709 DOS 486, 4mb, M		

How To Select CD-ROMs For Your System.

Each selection includes the following important information: minimum system required, minimum CPU required, minimum amount of RAM required, and required peripherals (M=mouse, J=joystick, K=keyboard, P=printer).

For all titles, the *minimum* system requirements recommended (unless otherwise indicated) are: Hardware: SVGA monitor (256 colors), sound card, 40mb hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive. Operating System: DOS 5.0, Windows 3.1, Macintosh System 7.0.

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It's an interactive world, and *PC Games* is right there online to bring you everything you want to know about games: what's new; what's hot; where to find the best cheats, hints, and tips; and how to get the best shareware downloads! You'll never have to go anywhere else for gaming information. Just point your browser to **www.pcgamesmag.com** for the most up-to-date info.

- More and more, game news happens every day. When we meet with the game companies and producers, and when the hot releases are ready for you, we'll let you know.
- The Web's got it all—company information, downloads, and the sites that *you* create in tribute to your favorites. Here's where to find links to 'em all.
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NEW! ***PC Games*** and CompuServe have joined forces! CompuServe subscribers will soon be able to find all the gaming information they need in the PC Games Forum. Stay tuned for more updates here and at PC Games Online!

COMPUSERVE

Highlights of the Month

The *Star Trek* Gaming Universe

It's the show that keeps on giving. And *Star Trek*'s gift for the holiday season is another batch of games sure to thrill the legions of Trekkers. After you've checked out our feature on Star Trek: Borg and Star Trek: Voyager (page 48), visit PC Games Online for a Web guide to the *Trek* universe—including the official sites for the shows, enthusiast sites, and even more *Trek* gaming!

Space Bunnies Must Die! An Exclusive Look

Pulse Entertainment taps into another offbeat, irresistible world with the upcoming action game Space Bunnies Must Die! You've never seen armor-toting, gun-blasting rabbits quite like these (just check the picture above)—and now you can by downloading our first look at the game! Check it out at www.pcgamesmag.com/features/bunnies/.

Games, UK-Style

We all know it doesn't matter where it's from if it's fun to play, right? Well, there's a ton of intriguing games coming from England and Scotland, including QAD (Quintessential Art of Destruction, top) and Aqua'Tak. We'd have sent Reviews Editor Rob Smith over to check 'em out, but we didn't have to—he's a UK native and a veteran of the British gaming scene. See his online-exclusive report at www. pcgamesmag.com/features/UK/.

THE CRITICS CAN'T ESCAPE THE SPELL...

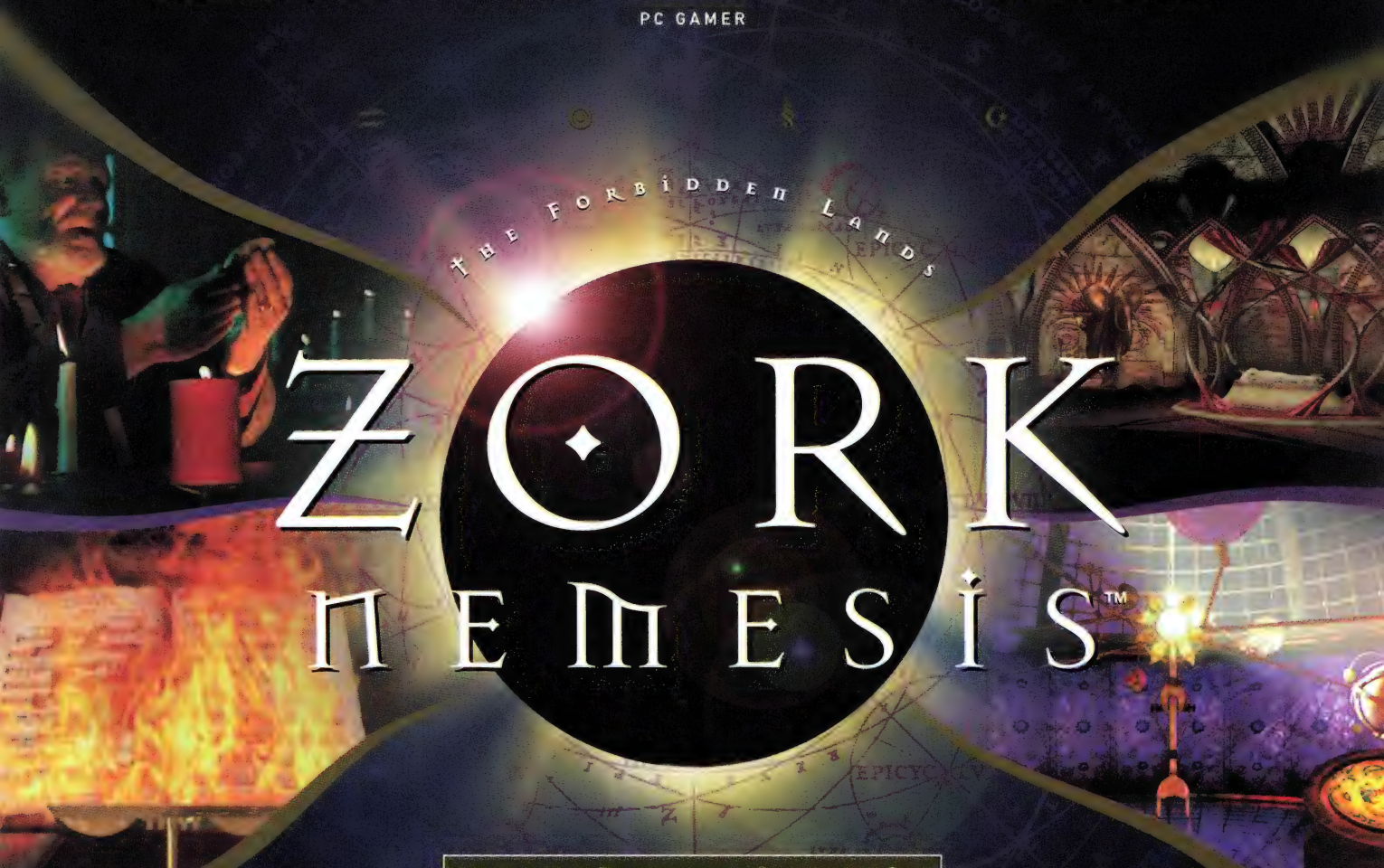
"IT MAKES MYST LOOK LIKE A WORD JUMBLE."
NEWSWEEK

"ZORK NEMESIS IS A BRILLIANT EXAMPLE OF WHAT AN ADVENTURE GAME SHOULD BE."
PC ENTERTAINMENT/GAMES

"I CAN'T OVEREMPHASIZE HOW SPECTACULAR ZORK NEMESIS LOOKS."
CD-ROM TODAY

"THIS GAME CAPTURES YOUR ATTENTION WITH ITS STUNNING GRAPHICS AND HAUNTING AUDIO..."
COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

"ALTHOUGH IT'S SURE TO RECEIVE PLENTY OF COMPARISON TO MYST, IT'S IN A CLASS ALL ITS OWN."
PC GAMER



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Letters

Question of the Month: What Do You Expect?

You run to the store and nab your favorite game. How many hours of gameplay should it provide? If it's a quick game, should it have awesome graphics? Stellar sound? Ten difficulty levels? Or are these just a given? What else should it have, and what compensates for what? In short, what do you expect to get for your money? Let us know your opinion by writing to us at Letters to the Editor, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; faxing us at 415-349-7482; or e-mailing us at pcgamesletters@iftw.com.

Game Lag

As an avid gamer, I'll normally finish a game in a week or two. Because there's such a drought of good games during the summer, I usually end up buying lower-graded games just to get by. My question is, Why is the summer always a dry period for new games?

Robert L. Clark
Warrington, PA

It seems gamemakers think their customers need to get sun and fresh air more often. So, in an effort to espouse a healthy lifestyle, they release fewer games in the summer to encourage you to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors. But seriously, Robert, companies save their biggest products for the holiday season, when they figure demand will be higher and more people will be in front of their computers. We understand the logic, but it'd sure be nice to see a few more A-List contenders during the summer months. —*Ed.*

Need to Know

Do you have any idea when Star Control 3 is going to be released?

Jon Lu
jester@vividnet.com

According to Accolade, this interstellar action/adventure game should ship sometime between late September and early October. Look for our review soon. —*Ed.*

Where're the Columns?

I really like your new style and name, which reflect your content better. I noticed recently that regulars like The Ref and Wirehead have been missing. What happened to them? I enjoyed reading their articles, which gave insight into all kinds of topics that didn't have to do specifically with certain games, but with the gaming industry. Keep up the awesome work.

Matt Bennett
Bubbles185@aol.com

Thanks for the feedback, Matt. As far as our columns, The Ref never left—he just changed his name to The Player. Good news for Wirehead fans, too: Our Internet gaming scribe is bringing his observations online. Look for Wirehead to become a recurring feature on our Web site, **www.pcgamesmag.com**, *in the near future.* —*Ed.*

Whoops

In our August issue we gave the wrong Web address for Gateway 2000's Destination. The correct address is **www. gateway2000.com/destination.**

August's Question of the Month (Windows 95–Gaming Bane or Boon?) generated a flurry of mail, from all sides. Some people thought the platform lived up to its hype. Others liked it, but were more inclined to stick with DOS. And many readers–about half of those who wrote–were profoundly disappointed with Microsoft's newest OS.

I basically have no respect for Windows 95. When I used it, it repeatedly messed up, and the first two weeks one of my friends had it, it crashed his system three different times. Bill Gates and the rest of Mafiasoft were just concerned with getting some money-making software on the shelf when Win 95 was proposed. This OS (and I use that term lightly) was made mostly for good looks. Maybe it should be called Lose 95.

Derrick R Hallman
jl6@juno.com

I own a 486DX4/100 with 16MB of RAM. The machine is well-configured and runs Windows 95 beautifully. However, I'm convinced that Windows 95 will never be the gaming platform so touted by Microsoft. I have numerous games that are supposed to be Windows 95–compatible, but when I run them in Windows there is always some kind of degradation. Since this software works flawlessly in DOS, I just don't bother with Windows anymore when it comes to running games.

Dave Olshina
davemeister@csbh.mhv.net

The Windows 95 platform is the best thing to hit the gaming world since Super VGA graphics! I have used it for quite some time and have found that all games run smoother and I'm up and running in no time! The original setup can be a little tricky, but once you have the program correctly configured to your system and vice versa, it handles all hardware configurations for you (it has for me, anyway)! Windows 95, in my opinion, eliminates plenty of headaches.

Mark Saumure
msaumure@iaw.com

I'm still a bit apprehensive about taking the plunge into Win 95. There is too much of a commitment involved to just install and see if I like it. Obviously, that means I can't play the new "must-have" Win 95 games. This new turn is good for Microsoft, but I can't see where these games are good for those companies creating them. Surely game companies can see that people like me will opt for a similar DOS game rather than installing a whole new OS. A DOS game can be used by virtually all, yet Win 95 games cut their potential customers drastically. Does Microsoft offer a kickback for these games? Is there some incredible programming advantage? What's in it for them?

Troy Hiscock
Hiscock_Troy/sk_ice@sask.aecl.ca

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL WILEY

SIMCITY 2000 NETWORK EDITION

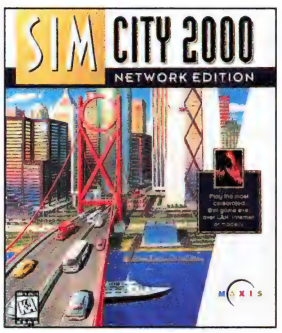
The world's most popular simulation finally gets some competition.

Player 1 is the server that brings the players together—before trying to bring them to their knees in a mad scramble for power.

Player 2 surveys the city looking for suggestions he can make to the group on how best to beautify their burgeoning burg.

Player 3 is in the midst of heated negotiations with Player 1 that could bring some much-needed revenue to her district.

Player 4 checks out the new stadium and power plant he shrewdly got approved at the city's last real-time town meeting.



After years as the only city simulator in town, SimCity 2000 now has some worthy competitors. Namely, you and three friends, competing for resources and revenue over the Internet or a LAN. Or two of you can go head-to-head over a modem. It's the SimCity 2000 Network Edition—now ready to compete for your free time.

When you're building a mega-metropolis, two heads (or three or four) are better than one. So import saved SimCity 2000 cities or start a new urban sprawl. Chat live with your connected commissioners. Wheel and deal for property and vote in town meetings.

Or forget back-scratching and try back-stabbing—in a shameless grab for political power. **The Network Edition. Not just multi-layered. It's multi-played.**

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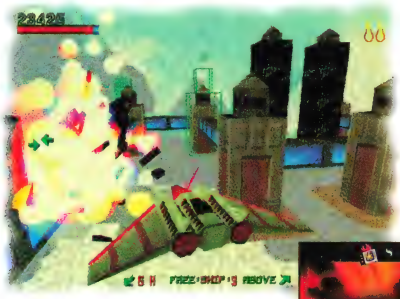
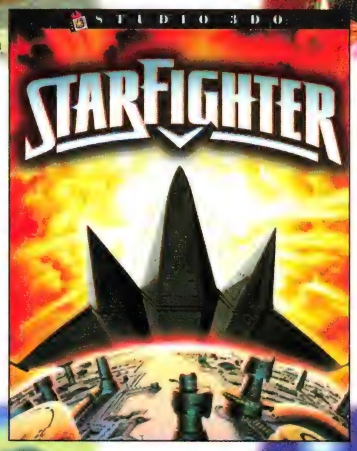
IT'S MORE THAN
A BATTLEGROUND.

IT'S A MIND FIELD.





Studio 3DO has surgically fused the human trigger finger to the human brain. The result? *Star Fighter*™– an explosive hard-core shooter that demands strategic thinking for success. Immerse yourself in a vast 3D world. Soar. Explore. Scorch thousands of enemy targets. Fly anywhere. Fly upside down. Leave the airspace for outer space. You've got new places to see, new places to incinerate. But don't bask in the nuclear afterglow just yet. Because if you don't use your head, the inventive aliens will. Usually as a souvenir ash-tray. Sometimes as a hand puppet. See your favorite retailer or to order direct, dial 1-800-336-3506, or give us a shot on the Web: www.3do.com

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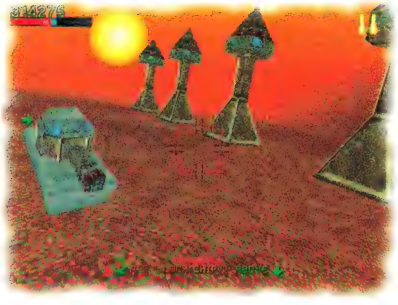

"Stellar!"

— Next Generation, March 1996

PC THAT'S NOT EXACTLY PC
STUDIO 3DO

Babbage's
America's Software Headquarters

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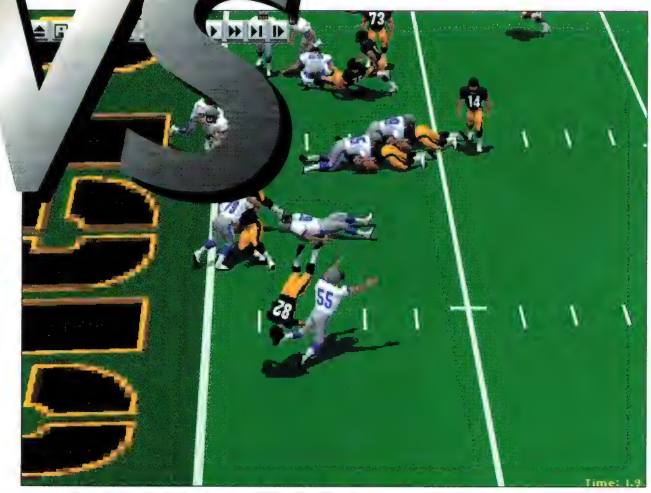
Are You Ready For Some Football?



Sierra sacked the low-resolution numbers in favor of texture-mapped jersey numbers in FPS: Football Pro '97.

NFL football sims have long been Sierra On-Line's domain, but computer quarterbacks have a full lineup to choose from this year: At least seven companies are going helmet-to-helmet for gridiron glory.

Madden's presence looms large in Electronic Arts' first PC football sim.

Every night can be a Monday night.

Almost every offering honors time-tested football-sim standards—robust stats, all the NFL teams and players, motion-captured graphics, authentic stadium noise, and hundreds of plays in editable playbooks. This year's new touchdown touchstones look to be modem and network capabilities, arcade-style gameplay, and TV-style presentation.

Sierra is incorporating modem and network play in Front Page Sports: Football Pro '97, as well as redesigning its play editor (it now takes six Wizard steps rather than 110 mouse clicks to design a play), boosting the general manager AI, and taking advantage of such Windows 95 features as multiple windows and DirectX for faster graphics and easy connectivity. Still, the FPS: Football series, which has sold half a million copies worldwide, faces tough competition for the first time this year.

"We want to establish a new computer experience for football," said Erik Whiteford, product manager for Electronic Arts' highly anticipated Madden '97. "Up until now, it's been a stats experience, a me-vs.-the-computer experience. Now it's going to be a me-vs.-you experience."

Not only can two people square off on one PC in Madden '97, but EA is also including modem and network play and will have a Web site (**www.ea.com/easports**) where competitors can find matches, enter tournaments, and download current stats, rosters, and replays.

The game itself is the result of nine years of experience on 16- and 32-bit console systems, where about 7 million Maddens have been sold. EA evaluated all past products and used focus groups to pick the best aspects of each Madden version. The presentation is very much like a Sunday telecast—John Madden and Pat Summerall provide pregame scouting reports and commentary during the game. There's also 100 minutes of video at "Madden University," where John shares offensive, defensive, special teams, and basic strategies.

Not surprisingly, OverTime Sports' ABC's Monday Night Football takes the TV-like presentation a step further. Its "virtual broadcast" interface lets you click to access NFL Films' highlights, team info, and broadcasters' analysis, or get right to a game (hosted, of course, by Al, Frank, and Dan).

The gameplay looks fast and furious. With an accelerator card, the texture-mapped, polygonal players move at 25 to 30 frames per second (around 15fps without acceleration). Monday Night Football also features modem, network, and Internet play, and Stats Inc. will provide downloadable stat and roster updates weekly.

Another new entry, Philips Media's NFL Total Control Football, emphasizes the general-manager role, leaving out modem/network options and real NFL players.

Others joining the pigskin party include Acclaim's NFL Quarterback Club '97; Corel's Bradshaw Football; and Accolade's Legends Football '97, which lets you pit today's clubs against teams from 1932, 1950, and 1968.

—Willem Knibbe

FOOTBALL LINEUP

GAME	COMPANY	PRICE	SHIP	MODEM/LAN
ABC's Monday Night Football	OverTime Sports	$49–$59	9/96	Yes
Bradshaw Football	Corel	$59	10/96	No
Front Page Sports: Football Pro '97	Sierra On-Line	$59.95	11/96	Yes
Legends Football '97	Accolade	$49.95	10/96	No
Madden '97	Electronic Arts	$59.95	9/96	Yes
NFL Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	$49.99	10/96	Yes
NFL Total Control Football	Philips	$49.95	9/96	No

It Must Be the Rain

The Avian is one of RAMA's many fascinating creatures.

Powerhouses from the Great Northwest are readying a cornucopia of fall PC titles, with Washington-based Microsoft and Sierra On-Line announcing an ambitious slate of releases.

Microsoft's assault on the PC games market is gathering steam with a barrage of titles that could prove the viability of Windows 95 as a gaming platform with their use of DirectX APIs to enhance graphics, sound, and multiplayer gaming.

Deadly Tide is a railed shooter with stunning graphics and a seamless switch between the action and cut sequences. Set underwater in the year 2500, it's an action-packed blaster with Hive-like "pivot points" to let you rotate 360 degrees.

Hellbender, an update to the futuristic space shooter Fury^3, features the voice of Gillian Anderson (*The X-Files*) as your craft's onboard computer. Developed by Terminal Reality, Hellbender has Descent-style tunnel elements and offers plenty of possibilities for multiplayer gaming.

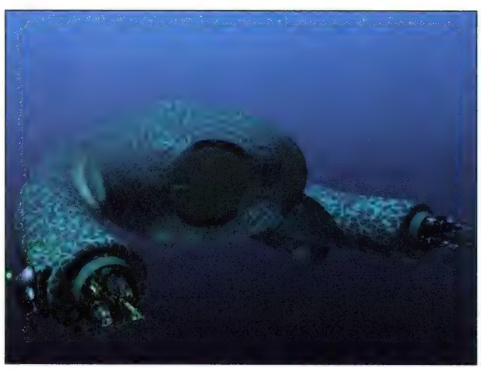
Microsoft Flight Simulator is being updated for Windows 95 with new planes, better graphics, and digitally sampled airplane sounds. Rounding out Microsoft's lineup are Monster Truck Madness, a realistic offroad driving action game; NBA Full Court Press, an officially endorsed basketball sim; Microsoft Soccer; and the third revision of the company's Golf sim.

Meanwhile, Sierra On-Line's Dynamix subsidiary is venturing onto the Internet with the highly anticipated Trophy Bass 2. This upcoming fishing sim has five new lakes and will allow up to 100 people to compete against each other via the Internet. There's also modem play for head-to-head angling.

Red Baron 2, a WWI flying sim, sports a random mission generator and enhanced AI and graphics. RAMA, based on the sci-fi novels of Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee, combines puzzles with full-motion video and beautiful character animations.

Sierra is also putting the finishing touches on Cyber Gladiators, a fighting game in the tradition of Virtua Fighter II and Tekken; Hunter Hunted, a third-person-perspective action/strategy game in which aliens pit you against a warrior from another species; a creepy pinball game; a golf sim that uses back-and-forth mouse movements to simulate swings; and Front Page Sports: Football Pro '97. (Sierra On-Line, 800-757-7707, www.sierra.com; Microsoft, 800-426-9400, www.microsoft.com/games/)

—Rob Smith and Willem Knibbe



Microsoft's Deadly Tide puts you at the helm of a hydrofighter.

Wicked Slice, Old Boy

Perhaps no other golf event can match the British Open for prestige. One of the sport's four major tournaments, The Open (as it's known in the UK) pits the world's best players against each other on some of the oldest, most acclaimed courses in the world.

Most of us weekend hackers have to be content with merely watching The Open on television. Not anymore. Looking Glass Technologies–maker of Terra Nova and Flight Unlimited–is bringing The Open experience to the PC for the first time. The company has obtained an exclusive license from the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of Scotland for the game, which is called, appropriately enough, British Open Golf.

The title will include two of golf's most historic courses, St. Andrews (Scotland) and Royal Troon (England), each painstakingly modeled in 3D. Players will be able to compete against a handful of select PGA Tour pros, including Ian Baker-Finch, Vijay Singh, and Chip Beck. British Open Golf is slated to ship next month. (Looking Glass Technologies; 800-874-4607; www.lglass.com)

–Steve Klett

Fertile Fall Harvest in The Great Northwest

Microsoft's Releases

OCTOBER	
Deadly Tide	$54.95
GEX for Windows 95	$44.95
Hellbender	$44.95
Monster Truck Madness	$44.95
NBA Full Court Press	$44.95
NOVEMBER	
Microsoft Flight Simulator for Windows 95	$59.95
Microsoft Golf 3.0	$44.95
Microsoft Soccer	$44.95

Sierra's Releases

SEPTEMBER	
Trophy Bass 2	$59.95
3D Ultra Pinball: Creep Night	$49.00
OCTOBER	
Cyber Gladiators	$55.00
Hunter Hunted	$54.00
RAMA	$54.95
NOVEMBER	
Front Page Sports: Golf	$59.95
Front Page Sports: Football Pro '97	$59.95
Red Baron 2	$59.95

scouting REPORT

Hardball 6 to Enter 3rd Dimension

Everything from the stadiums (including old favorites such as the Polo Grounds) to the players (with texture-mapped faces) will be 3D in Accolade's flagship baseball game Hardball 6, the game's producers say. Other improvements for Hardball 6, due this spring, include enhancements to home-run celebrations, fielding control, and multiplayer accessibility. (Accolade; 800-245-7744; www.accolade.com)

A Growing Civilization

MicroProse has announced an add-on disc to Civilization II, a game that's sold more than 400,000 copies worldwide. The Civilization II Scenario Disc will present new historical settings from which you can begin managing your world. The add-on will be available by Christmas; pricing has not been determined yet. For an early peek, check out the new shareware scenarios already available at MicroProse's Web site. (MicroProse; 800-879-7529; www.microprose.com)

Ultima Online Ready for Beta Test

Having undergone "pre-alpha" tests in April and May, Origin's Ultima Online is expected to enter beta testing within a month. At least 10,000 volunteers will put the online RPG through its paces, according to the company. Ultima Online is scheduled to ship in December. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; www. ea.com/origin.html)

GT Acquires FormGen and Humongous

GT Interactive, already the primary distributor of first-person 3D action games, has bought FormGen, publisher of Duke Nukem 3D, Rise of the Triad, and

STAR TALK with John de Lancie

One minute he's playful; the next, scary as all hell. You never know exactly what to expect from Q, the godlike guest star on Star Trek: The Next Generation *and its spinoffs. And we weren't sure whether John de Lancie was going to mock our human frailties or show us the afterlife. As it turns out, this articulate actor spared us. But he had a lot to say to* PC Games *editors Corey Cohen and Donald St. John about himself, his character, and the interactive adventure Star Trek: Borg.*

***PC Games*: First off, did you enjoy being in Star Trek: Borg? How did it differ from doing a TV episode?**

John de Lancie: Well, I enjoyed it from an actor's point of view—it's fun when you're working with people you like. On a larger scale, I guess I enjoyed it because there was a sense of what it was like when movies became talkies: there was so much discussion about the technology involvement. It was neat because the conversations had do with being at what appeared to be pretty much the cutting edge of CD-ROMs and seeing how much they could push the envelope.

***PC Games*: Did you have any input on the script or the way Q was written?**

JDL: Yes, there were a few times, and there was one instance where there was some discussion about how I would be dressed and whether it was appropriate or not. I said: "Well, knowing this character well, since I [helped develop him], I can tell you that that's the wrong way to approach it. What is inappropriate is actually appropriate. The more inappropriately I'm dressed, the better off we are...because it's actually keeping very much in line with what Q is." The fact is, this is a character where damn near *anything* is acceptable.

***PC Games*: Q always shows up in some odd get-ups, but you looked particularly uncomfortable in that Borg suit.**

JDL: It's *terribly* uncomfortable. It puts you into an attitude where it looks like you've popped a couple of vertebrae.

***PC Games*: We know this is your first experience being in a CD-ROM. Are you a computer user?**

JDL: I kind of accompany my children with the games they play. I spend hours and hours using a computer, but not that much of it in gameland.

***PC Games*: Does having done ST: Borg raise your interest in the medium at all?**

JDL: Well, what intrigues me is that two years ago, I and probably most of the people in my end of the business, including agents, thought [interactive games] were probably a little bit more than a porno film, but not much higher up than that in terms of [what it all meant]. And yet, in the last two years, things have clearly begun to change. When I went over to E3, I was flabbergasted. And frankly, I was flabbergasted when I arrived at the Borg set. I did a spot for Compaq in the beginning of the year—they asked me to be the tutorial person for their Presarios. That's when I began to get a sniff at the fact that this was a delivery system that had matured far beyond my appreciation of it. I've gained an appreciation and an interest in it that I just didn't have six months ago.

***PC Games*: And that opens up a lot more opportunities for working in that realm, we'd think.**

JDL: That's right. As I've said to my friends, this is something we need to start taking seriously.

Game Gurus Hit the Road

The games industry is getting more like Hollywood every day. Top producers get smash hits under their belt for an established company, then use their new fame and fortune to form their own studios.

Origin Systems recently bid farewell to Chris Roberts, producer of the Wing Commander series. He's forming his own company, Digital Anvil.

"Half our projects will be Wing Commander kind of stuff," Roberts said, "and the other half will be multiplayer action/strategy stuff over the Internet, LAN, or modem. I'm going to build multiplayer games I want to play. Hopefully, it will work out as well as Wing Commander."

The Wing Commander and Civilization series will have to continue without their creators.

With more than 500,000 copies of Wing Commander IV sold worldwide, you can bet the series will continue apace at Origin. A permanent replacement for Roberts hasn't been picked yet, but the team is intact and working on a new story and a new engine. Origin is also readying the $39.99 Wing Commander: The Kilrathi Saga, a collection of the first three Wing Commanders optimized for Windows 95.

Meanwhile, Sid Meier and two top designers recently left MicroProse to form Firaxis Software. Meier, who co-founded MicroProse, is the game guru responsible for such blockbusters as Railroad Tycoon, F15 Strike Eagle, Civilization, and Civ II.

"We don't want to get so big that we can't focus on product," said Jeff Briggs, Firaxis' president and CEO, and former director of product development at MicroProse. "I'm going to create an environment here that allows guys to do what they do best and keep management stuff out of their hair."

Meier and Briggs are joined by game designer Brian Reynolds, who worked on Civ II and Colonization. Given the founding trio's past, Firaxis will concentrate on the strategy genre, Briggs said.

"We have several prototypes we're playing with, as many as four to five that are playable," he revealed. "Look for something [on shelves] within the next two years." Firaxis is currently negotiating with publishers, Briggs said.

MicroProse says the Civ series will continue, with a Civ II add-on due by Christmas (see Scouting Report, page 18). The Meier-less Civ III should be out sometime in 1998. *—Willem Knibbe*

Women Are in the Game

A survey conducted for the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) contains some news about PC user demographics that seems to fly in the face of commonly held conventions about gender and gaming. According to the NPD Group's study of 1,700 households owning either a gaming console, a PC with entertainment software, or both, 40 percent of the people using PCs to run entertainment software are females.

The study also suggests that women are involved in almost half of all purchases of PC games, and that 45.3 percent of actual purchases are made by women. These buys include child-oriented titles categorized as games, not educational software.

Also of note (though hardly surprising to late-night gamers) is the study's finding that PCs are used more for running entertainment software than any other application, including word processing.

–Daniel Morris

scouting REPORT

and Terminal Velocity. Having previously acquired distribution rights to the console versions of Duke Nukem 3D, Duke Nukem Forever, and Prey, GT hopes to benefit from FormGen's shareware publishing expertise. GT has also picked up Humongous Entertainment, a leading publisher of children's software. (GT Interactive Software; 800-610-4847; www.gtinteractive.com)

Pinball Wizards

The September release of Interplay's Virtual Pro Pinball comes with an unusual topping: the game is guaranteed to improve your actual pinball scores or you can get your money back. Pro Pinball, which joins Virtual Pool and Virtual Snooker as the latest entry in the company's Virtual series, contains four tables and offers hidden features and subgames. (Interplay; 800-969-4263; www.interplay.com)

More tales of the silverball: 21st Century Entertainment is offering its Pinball Builder as a pinball design kit for frustrated table-tailors the world over. Under DOS, Win 3.1, or Win 95, pinball designers can construct their own tables by importing graphics, adding sound effects and MIDI music, and determining object properties. Oh, and you can play the thing once you're done, of course. (21st Century Entertainment; 716-872-1200; www.21stcent.com)

Psygnosis to Support Rendition

Rendition's Verite 3D graphics engine has found a new home at Psygnosis, which plans to adopt the 3D-acceleration technology in such titles as Formula 1 and Wipeout XL. Psygnosis will optimize the titles for use with Rendition's engine in an attempt to secure arcade-quality 3D graphics on PC platforms. (Rendition; 415-335-5900; www.rendition.com)

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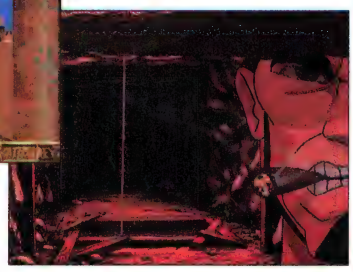
LucasArts Gets Connected, Outlawed



Outlaws has rich first- and third-person perspectives.

The Imperial forces have never looked better—or more menacing.

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is a hot property for the thousands of gamers who flew those LucasArts craft in their earlier incarnations. More missions, stunning detail in the texture-mapped ships, and—most importantly—the network/modem options add a whole new scope to *Star Wars* gaming.

Lucas isn't stopping there, however. Inspired by the spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone, Outlaws uses the Dark Forces and Rebel Assault II engines in a three-pronged adventure set in the dangerous Wild West. A cinematic epic, bounty-hunter action game, and multiplayer shootout in the guise of one of 12 desperate outlaws provide plenty of variation. And the first-person perspective used in each of the three stages enhances the immersive atmosphere. So don the guise of James Anderson, the toughest lawman in the West, and wreak havoc on the desperadoes that populate these towns.

Both games are due in time for Christmas.

—Rob Smith

Multiplayer Merger

Two former competitors in the online multiplayer-gaming arena are now collaborators: Mpath, hard at work on its Mplayer service, recently merged with Catapult Entertainment, which had been beta testing its XBAND PC service.

The two companies say they examined all the competition in the emerging (but already crowded) online gaming market and saw that they were both heading in the same direction with the same basic plan.

"[Mpath's] spent a lot of money on the server side in developing a low-latency [fast connection-time] network," said Lynn Heublein, Catapult COO. "We've spent more time really focusing on the community aspects of online gaming. Link those together, and you have by far the dominant service."

"Catapult had the same architectural model we have–distributed servers all over the area you're trying to service," said Paul Matteuci, Mpath president and CEO. "And they're strong on the client side. It's more than just the user interface; it's the way they've integrated the user interface into the Web."

Also attractive to Mpath was Catapult's experience with its successful XBAND service for Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo, which has been running for two years. Not only can Mpath use that knowledge to migrate its service to console platforms, Matteuci said, but Catapult already has day-to-day experience with customer service, billing, and delivering daily content. The combined company will be known as Mpath, with the XBAND name living on in the console space.

Mpath's Mplayer is in beta testing with about 1,500 users, and should launch this fall. Look for Catapult's technologies to be integrated in a second release scheduled for early next year.

"The good news for gamers is that our development efforts were so synergistic that products will come to market much faster than they would have [if the companies hadn't merged]," Heublein said.

Mplayer's current online offerings include Command & Conquer, MechWarrior 2, Terminal Velocity, and Warcraft: Orcs and Humans. Catapult brings Doom II, Ultimate Doom, Final Doom, Hexen, Super Street Fighter II, Locus, Hardball 5, and Star Control 3 to the online party. ***–Willem Knibbe***

LEADER BOARD

The best-selling PC games

RANKING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING
1	**Duke Nukem 3D** (FormGen; 800-263-2390; DOS CD; $39.99)	1	2	A
2	**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness** (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $50)	2	7	A
3	**Civilization II** (MicroProse; 800-879-7529; DOS CD; $49.99)	3	3	A
4	**AH-64D Longbow** (Jane's Combat Simulations; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.99)	–	1	A-
5	**Myst** (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; $54.95)	5	26	A
6	**Microsoft Return of Arcade** (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD; $34.95)	10	2	C
7	**Command & Conquer** (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)	7	8	C
8	**Advanced Tactical Fighters** (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)	–	1	B
9	**Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1** (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; $59.95)	6	11	B
10	**Monopoly Multimedia** (Virgin; 800-874-4607; Win/Win 95 CD; $39.99)	–	1	B

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games in 1,300 retail stores for June 1996. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data

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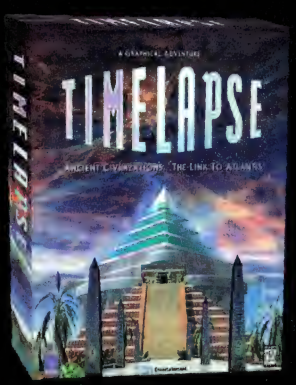

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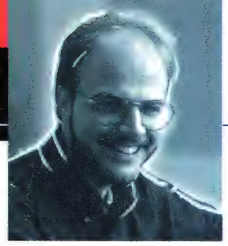

Steve Klett

The Great Quake Debate

It seems like just yesterday The Player was shaking his head in disbelief over the sheer volume and passion of the Doom-vs.-Dark Forces debate. For some, Doom's multiplayer capabilities made it the hands-down winner. For others, Dark Forces' *Star Wars* environment and story were more important.

Now, it's déjà vu all over again with Duke Nukem 3D and Quake.

But that's just fine with The Player, as, once again, it gives him a chance to step up on his soapbox and voice his opinion, which, of course, is the *only* one that matters. (Editor's note: *PC Games* is obviously reaping no benefit from all those payments to cover the treatment costs for The Player's delusions of grandeur).

Is Quake the most incredible first-person action game ever? Yes. Is it head and tails above all the competition? Yes. And no. Does it live up to the staggering amount of hype it generated? Not quite.

Technically, Quake is easily the best in its genre, which is only natural, given that Doom was the first game of its kind that really mattered. Nothing can match Quake's technical achievements.

It's got texture-mapped, true 3D polygonal characters; bridges, ledges, and hanging platforms galore; and rooms on top of rooms on top of rooms. (Duke has only a few of these effects, and they're faked to a certain extent.) Quake's light sourcing is amazing, its ambient sounds are unsettling, and its tortured Nine Inch Nails soundtrack is truly haunting.

But now a bigger test: to Deathmatch or Dukematch?

All these factors combine to make Quake the most immersive first-person game The Player has ever seen—not to mention the very first to make him drop his keyboard in shock on more than one occasion. (Have *you* played it yet with the lights off?)

But it could have been much, much better.

Many call it Doom III: It has the same disjointed collection of episodes, which really have no connection to one another. The basic gameplay is the same—you still can't crouch or fly (more on that later). And id's sad attempt at a story is so pitiful it's laughable.

Everyone knows by now that id's formula is to make a game first and then throw in the story right before it goes out the door, but Quake's wafer-thin plot is simply inane. You'd think that with all those Doom profits, id could have hired a decent writer to create a script for Quake that could match its technical merits.

But, story or no, Quake's level of immersion—and its challenge—make it The Player's favorite single-player, first-person action game, surpassing even his beloved Duke.

Yet, there's still another, bigger test: to Deathmatch or Dukematch? The first time he played a Quake deathmatch and looked up from a dark hallway just in time to see someone jumping down on his head from a walkway high above, firing a rocket, The Player thought Quake was the best multiplayer game around.

Then he played some more and found himself reconsidering his hasty evaluation, and longing for Duke once again. Why? An enemy was chasing him down a hallway when he had only a shotgun and low health and ammo. What could he do? There was no steroid button to hit to get some much-needed escape speed; he couldn't turn on his jetpack and fly away; worst of all, he couldn't duck those rockets flying at his head. In Duke, he could've done all of these things.

Quake deathmatches often seem to boil down to a case of whoever gets the best weapon first, wins.

The Player also likes Duke's realistic environments, which are much easier to navigate via landmarks than Quake's.

So, which game would The Player pick if he were imprisoned in the farthest reaches of Siberia with a computer and could choose only one? It's Quake if he doesn't have a modem line or network connection, and Duke if he does. For multiplayer mayhem, Duke offers more strategic elements and is simply more fun to play.

Thankfully, The Player doesn't have to make this choice—his editors' attempts to send him to Siberia failed—and he can enjoy each game for what it does best.

Which game would you choose? As always, let The Player know your opinions at Sklett@iftw.com.

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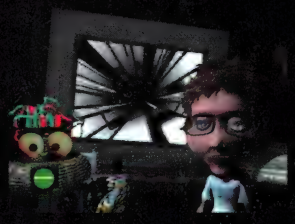

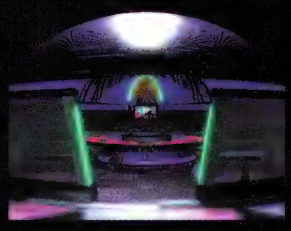

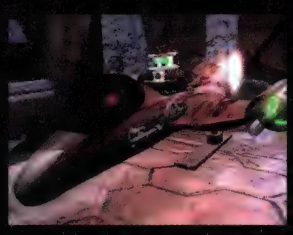

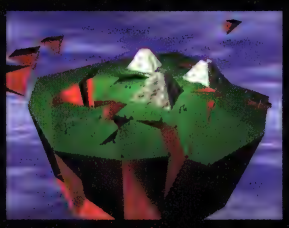

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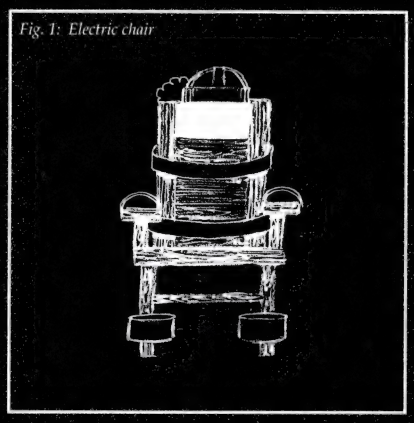

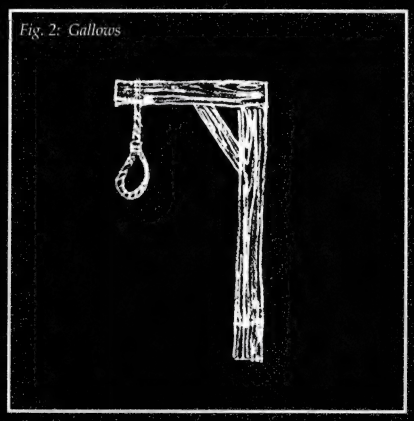

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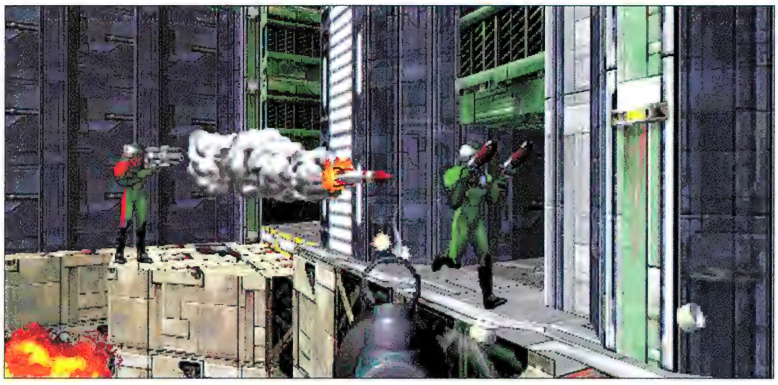
Peter Olafson

Race to Infinity

A beta version of Marathon Infinity reveals bigger, brawnier, and potentially eternal sides to Bungie's series. As other PC classics make their way to the Mac (see below), the third leg of Bungie's Marathon promises to be the toughest and best Mac 3D action game.



The designers are living large in this one. The 20-plus single-player levels and 10 or so multiplayer levels are more complex, and the time it takes to make it to the end has been extended. The early levels I played, while sparsely populated, carried a sense of quiet immensity and weight. Marathon has always had presence and atmosphere, but it's also had a certain *smallness* about it. In Infinity, that feeling is gone.

However, don't look for wholesale changes of the sort that accompanied the jump from Marathon to Marathon 2. For instance, there's just one new weapon (a sub-machine gun that fires darts), no new aliens (though there are some variations in alien behavior and constitution), and just two new sets of textures.

Infinity's main enhancement to Marathon 2's game engine is the ability to tag an environmental model to a specific level without affecting other levels. This option should add immensely to the game's variety, strategy, and difficulty—zero gravity has an interesting effect on weapons—and means you'll constantly be adjusting.

The other big change is the add-ons. The CD includes Forge, Bungie's intuitive level editor. So technically, the game can go on as long as you have the drive to keep building (or downloading) levels. (Hence, the "Infinity" moniker.) And unlike the BUILD editor that accompanies Duke Nukem 3D and Witchaven II, Forge promises to be properly explained, with almost 160MB of tutorial movies on CD that should make level creation a less intimidating task.

The game looks great, but again, I played a very early version. The single-player levels and environment editor (christened Anvil) weren't ready for prime time, and the final network levels hadn't been decided. We'll be back for another look at Marathon Infinity when it's done—maybe in time for next issue. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Mac Shorts

MechWarrior 2 (Activision): Effectively identical to the Windows 95 version, and identically great. Movement of your 30-foot 'bot is fluid, the controls intelligent, the missions invigorating, the graphics at once eye-catching and practical. I even like the intro, which takes a pleasantly anti-hero tack. Let's have that Ghost Bear's Legacy add-on, please, and quick. (A)

Alone in the Dark: The Trilogy (MacPlay): I usually don't review compilations, but this isn't an ordinary one. AITD: The Trilogy is two-thirds new to the Mac, as the second and third installments of this action/adventure series make their first appearances on this platform.

They're good appearances, too: All three of these games, which set polygonal characters against a bitmapped backdrop, will run in a succulent hi-res mode that easily surpasses the PC originals.

I did occasionally spot objects in front of my private detective that should have appeared behind him. And the later episodes (dealing with pirates and the Old West) don't have quite the hothouse atmosphere of the original game, a haunted-house extravaganza inspired by the works of H. P. Lovecraft. (B+)

Zork: Nemesis (Activision): Unfortunately, the seventh entry in the Zork adventure series isn't especially Zorky. (Where's the humor? Where's the history?) But this puzzley graphic adventure does have a certain technological punch in its 360-degree panning and 7th Guest–like video insets. Unhappily, the panning isn't as smooth or the graphics as vivid as in the Windows 95 version. And the neat little Alchemy book that came with the original release has been stuck on CD instead. Tacky. (C+)

Flight Unlimited (Looking Glass Technologies/Virgin): There's usually a fierce, bright line dividing real life from computer-game life. In this exquisite flight sim, that line grows as hazy as the horizon. The terrain that flows smoothly beneath you is photorealistic, and that's not just marketing jargon: It actually looks like a photograph, and, apart from the occasional shiny-doorknob effect, it *is* realistic. (The external view reveals the surface to be delightfully bumpy.) And since this is about flying rather than dying, you'll be asked when you crash if you want to hit the Tab key "for a miracle." Their mistake: the miracle is already here. (A)

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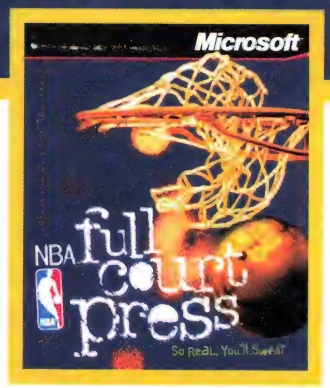

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SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE! and Other Truths

By Steve Klett

Pulse Entertainment is readying a trio of the most unique 3D games to come along in a while—if not ever. Are you ready?

Pulse Entertainment's Bad Mojo may not have been everyone's ideal adventure game. But whether you liked it or hated it, you had to appreciate its originality. How many adventure games ask you to take a perilous detour into the dark night of your soul and consider issues philosophers have pondered for ages—issues of loss and identity, unfulfilled potential and despair, and, finally, absolution. Oh yeah—and how many adventure games dare to have a creepy crawly cockroach as the protagonist?

Well, Bad Mojo, Pulse's first game, represented just the tip of the originality iceberg for the Santa Monica, Calif.–based company. Pulse has now set its sights on upping the ante for creative, original content in the 3D action genre, and the gaming world may never be the same.

"We're trying to innovate on technology and character creation—and, in the process, innovate on gameplay—by immersing players in the character and the interaction and story," says Bill Woodward, Pulse's CEO. "That's the big Pulse advantage, and it's something few people can do right now."

PC Games visited Pulse's offices for an exclusive first look at its three upcoming real-time 3D games: Space Bunnies Must Die! (no, we're not kidding), Flux, and Presto. While each of the games is still early in development—all of the titles are still "working titles"—each one showed enormous potential for original content, a robust and immersive story, and extremely addictive gameplay.

Bad Mojo got the originality ball rolling at Pulse.

THIS IS NO BUGS BUNNY!

Drew Huffman, Pulse's president, may be the only person alive who could sit and explain the premise of Space Bunnies Must Die! with a straight face.

The name itself invites dubious looks, sounding more like a late-night cable flick than a game—and indeed, the title is in part a tribute to the classic sci-fi movies of the '50s. Add to that Huffman's high energy, enthusiasm, and good humor, and the fact that he delivers the Space Bunnies story so seriously is even more notable.

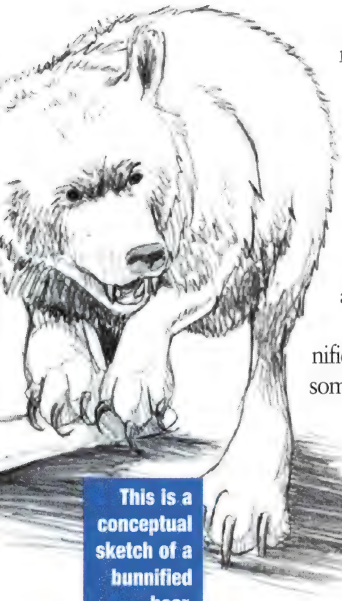
But it's also appropriate, because underneath the outrageous title and story is one helluva promising gaming experience wrapped in some impressive 3D technology.

"It's a crazy idea—it's outrageous," Huffman admits. "Everyone's first reaction is laughter, followed by 'Huh? What the hell are Space Bunnies, anyway?' We're making a wacky, wacky game. But it's backed with serious technology and is virtually guaranteed to be a lot of fun."

Watch out! These aren't your garden-variety rabbits.

Space Bunnies is set in the small town of Harvill, Mont., 75 years in the future. Rumors of extraterrestrials roaming the countryside run rampant. You're Allison Von Durlan, part of a crack team of marines (the Marine Advanced Detachment for Extraterrestrial Life Forms, to be exact) sent in half-heartedly by the government to investigate these "bogus" stories.

On its approach to the town, your transport craft is shot out of the sky by a huge UFO. As the sole crash survivor, you're the only one who knows that the ru-



This is a conceptual sketch of a bunnified bear.

mors of aliens on Earth are true, and that the town of Harvill has been commandeered—and all of its inhabitants killed—by hordes of armor-wearing, gun-toting, red-eyed, five-foot-tall, 300-pound bad-ass bunnies from outer space. These Space Bunnies are bent on taking over the world and "bunnifying" all of its inhabitants.

That's bad news. When a creature is bunnified, it is turned into a rabbit but retains some of its previous features. Players will encounter such bunnified creatures as bears, goats, deer, and frogs. These hybrids are slaves to the Space Bunnies, and as such, should be treated as enemies.

So, of course, it's up to you to outwit the Bunnies, thwart their plans, and save mankind. Your crusade will take you through the woods surrounding the town, the town of Harvill itself, and its vast network of sewers, which, oddly enough, hold the key to the Bunnies' plans—and the answer to why they chose this small, unimportant place as their staging point for their invasion of Earth.

Most of the action will be seen from the classic first-person perspective, but Pulse is also working on providing the option to switch to a third-person view.

You will have access to a wide range of weaponry with which to exterminate the rodent army: machine gun, bazooka, grenades, mines, laser pistol, shotgun, knives, pitchfork, sledge hammer, and more. Other proposed gadgets include snare traps (what better way to catch and kill a rabbit?), a radar map, infra-red goggles, a net, a jetpack, a hang glider, scuba gear, and a grappling hook. It's an ambitious array of gadgetry, and all of these items may not ultimately make it into the game. But as you can see, Pulse is looking to push the gameplay envelope with this weapons wish list.

Huffman puts it best: "We want to give you the coolest experience killing Bunnies that we can."

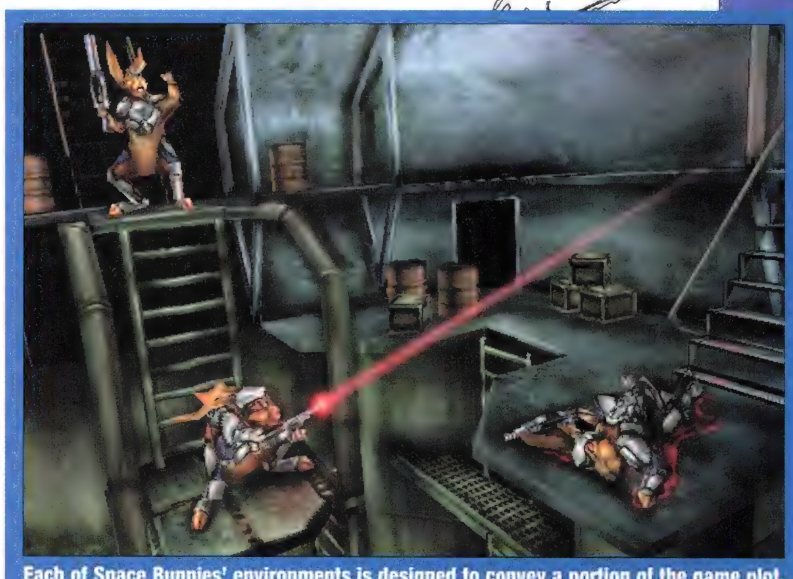
So just how gruesome will this rabbit hunt be? Will it be on a PG par with Elmer Fudd vs. Bugs Bunny, or will Bunny bits spray across the screen a la Quake and Duke Nukem? Pulse isn't sure yet. Right now, the team's devising the most grotesque means of death possible, as well as some tamer versions, so the final game will likely be somewhere in between.

Regardless of the level of blood-letting, it was clear to us after our visit that Space Bunnies' greatest feature is the lifelike quality of its creatures, which is conveyed through leading-edge 3D polygonal technology and superior artificial intelligence.

Pulse is making every effort to create killer rabbits that are as lifelike as possible.

Space Bunnies also steps outside of traditional gaming by casting a female as the lead character.

The Space Bunnies look, move, and act just like you'd expect a 300-pound, evil rabbit to—from the way they hop around to the way they jump. (You can see for yourself on this month's demo CD, PCGAMES.EXE.) While your first impulse may be to chuckle, remember, these



Each of Space Bunnies' environments is designed to convey a portion of the game plot.

Bunnies are armed and dangerous.

Each Bunny will consist of roughly 300 texture-mapped polygons, and will look good even close-up. And these rabbits aren't dumb either. They won't just stand there and shoot at you from prescribed places using preset routines; they'll analyze their surroundings for the best cover and react differently depending on the actions you take. Rabbits will dive behind a rock or tree when fired upon and will act in teams to flank you, like the velociraptors in *Jurassic Park*.

This grappling gun is but one of Simon's many toys.

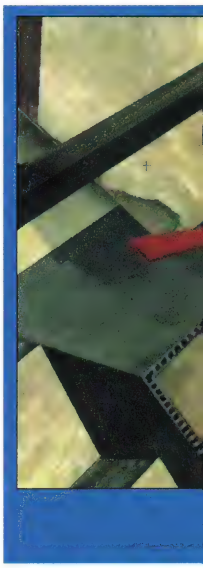
Better still, Space Bunnies Must Die! won't have the typical find-the-end-of-the-level-button construction typical of first-person shooters like Quake and Duke. Instead, the levels will represent stages of the plot, and each will have a definitive ending, with more narrative unfolding in cut scenes. For example, in the first scenario, you start at the crash site and try to make your way to Harvill while fending off bloodthirsty Space Bunnies and whatever bunnified creatures you happen across. When you find the town, "level one" ends and the plot thickens. Eventually, you must enter the Spaces Bunnies' burrow for a final showdown.

"There will be a cerebral quality to the level design, story, and characters that goes beyond everything else out there," Huffman promises. But he's quick to add that if someone wants to just log on and blast some Bunnies, they can do that, too.

The icing on the cake for Space Bunnies looks to be its multiplayer element. Not only can players work together against the Bunnies as different members of the marine commando team, but they can also square off in deathmatches as Space Bunnies and other bunnified creatures. To top it off, not everyone in a deathmatch has to be the same character. Aren't you just salivating over the prospect of being a muscle-bound killer rabbit? We certainly are.

Dr. Death

You'll have to be patient, though. Space Bunnies Must Die! won't appear in shareware form until Christmas, with the full version slated for release in early '97. When it ships, you'll also be treated to the first issue of what Pulse hopes will become and ongoing Space Bunnies Must Die! comic book series. For now, enter our exclusive Space Bunnies contest and win a one-of-a kind prize package (page 38).



Flux

It's clear that Pulse is out to turn the shooter genre on its long, floppy ear, but at the same time, it realizes the market is crowded with shooters. Pulse is betting gamers are hungering for something completely different. Enter Simon the salesman and Flux, the company's next game.

Flux is a level-based action game that's heavy on strategy and puzzle-solving. Modeled as a modern-day Charlie Chaplin, Flux's protagonist, Simon, is an ordinary guy whose ordinary world is suddenly turned upside-down—literally.

Simon is a salesman for Whiz Bang Inc., which, like the ACME company we all know and love from Road Runner cartoons, manufactures outrageous and improbable gadgets. One day Simon is sucked across the fifth dimension into the world of Flux. All of his gadgetry—magnetic boots, portable trampolines, jetpacks—is scattered throughout Flux's 40 levels. Simon's goal is simple: Recover his goods and return home.

Shifting perspectives are the name of this game.

Accomplishing that goal isn't so simple. You see, the world of Flux is unlike anything Simon (or the gaming world) has ever seen: Gravity continually shifts its direction. Floors become ceilings, walls become floors, and ceilings become walls. An unreachable skylight will suddenly become a trap door, and rope bridges become rope ladders. Inspiration for the game's levels came from the works of M. C. Escher and Leonardo da Vinci, so these worlds promise to be

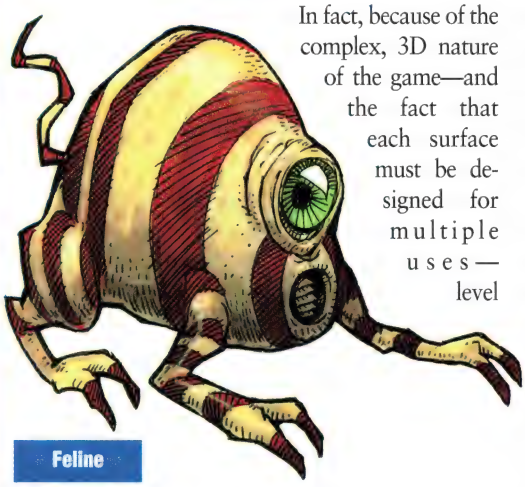
An ordinary Joe, Simon must overcome extraordinary circumstances.

both visually striking and exceedingly clever.

Players must guide Simon to the exit in each level by taking advantage of the environment's shifting orientation. The levels will start simply, by merely requiring you to get Simon to the exit; later levels will be filled with hazardous materials, traps, and enemy creatures that make reaching the end increasingly difficult. All the while, of course, there will be many, many imaginative ways for Simon to meet his maker.

Here Simon hangs above what was the ceiling a minute ago.

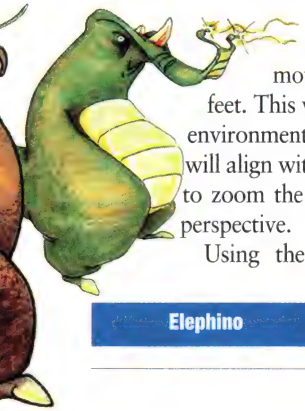
"In terms of level design, this will be one of the most sophisticated games to date," says Chad Nelson, project leader on Flux. "Players will have never seen anything like it."



Feline

In fact, because of the complex, 3D nature of the game—and the fact that each surface must be designed for multiple uses—level design is extremely challenging. The levels can't be sketched out; instead, the designers must create physical models of each level. These miniatures are then modeled in software.

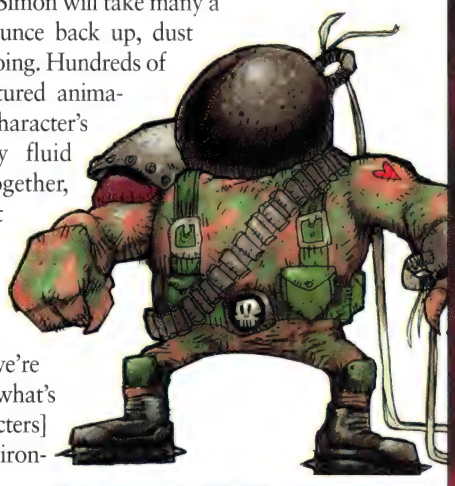
The levels will be nonlinear in the sense that there will be several different paths you can take to reach the end of the game. Depending on the choices you make, the game can become easier or harder to complete.



Elephino

You'll play Flux from a close third-person perspective, and will control the movement of Simon's head rather than his feet. This way, you will be able to quickly assess the environment around him. Upon moving, Simon's body will align with his line of sight. Players will also be able to zoom the camera in and out to obtain a different perspective.

Using the same character technology as Space Bunnies, Flux's Simon is being designed to be as incredibly lifelike as possible, so you can't help but become attached to him. Simon will take many a hard fall, but he'll bounce back up, dust himself off, and keep going. Hundreds of frames of motion-captured animation will make the character's movements extremely fluid and natural. Altogether, Simon will have about 300 different expressions and moves.



Headthrower

"We really want to give Simon as much life as possible, so we're pushing the limit of what's been done [with characters] in a real-time 3D environment," Nelson says.

Upon encountering one of the Whiz Bang gadgets, you will see a quick animation that shows its use. Many items have multiple uses, which fall into three main categories: offensive, defensive, and navigational.

The Instant Hole, for example, is an offensive gadget: When thrown on the floor it becomes a bottomless pit to any pursuing creature that steps into it. The defensive Personal Airbag, on the other hand, can save Simon from a long fall, while Simon can use the Magnetic Boots to navigate ceilings and walls. Other gadgets include the Instant Ladder, the Spring-Loaded Steel Cage, Suction-Cup Grips, the Briefcase Parachute, and the De-Atomizer Pistol. (And, yes, Flux will have a multiplayer component—perhaps even Internet play—so you'll be able to use all of these imaginative toys against your friends.)

Flux will have an equally wide range of opponent creatures—about five or six different beasties for each environment—each with its own unique personality and strategy. Some will be helpful, but most will be out to impede Simon's progress. Because Flux isn't meant to be a violent game like Space Bunnies, you'll have to find ways to use the gadgets, the environment, or both to outwit or avoid Flux's adversaries. And, as in Space Bunnies, Flux's characters will not always be in the same place doing the same thing—each will have intelligence, behavior, and purpose for each environment they're in.

Butterball

Look for Flux to appear in shareware form by the end of the year, with the full version shipping sometime in the spring.

Presto

Finally, there's Presto, an adventure game aimed at a more general audience. Like Space Bunnies and Flux, it's laden with gameplay potential and interesting, lifelike characters.

You play the role of a young boy who sets out to explore an old vaudevillian theater. You come upon an old ventriloquist dummy and are somehow sucked into its wooden body. As if that wasn't bad enough, a guard dog appears out of nowhere and has your two wooden legs and one of your arms for lunch!

Not to worry—it seems you're not the only soul inside the dummy. Presto, a wise-cracking old magician, also inhabits the wooden torso. With his help, you embark on a quest to reverse the curse that keeps you both prisoners.

How do you move, you ask? Simple: you use Presto's magic wand to animate some of the many objects laying around the theater—screwdrivers, hammers, an old pair of glasses, etc.—to use as a temporary arm and legs.

While Presto's plot is linear, the gameplay is dynamic: You must think strategically to figure out how and when to use the many interchangeable limb sets you'll find to overcome the game's myriad obstacles. As you play, Presto will offer up a multitude of one-liners, and occasionally, some helpful advice.

Your linear progression through every nook and cranny of the theater will be broken up with a series of real-time simulation segments. In one of these interludes, you must ride an airplane constructed from a screwdriver, feather, and glasses to the next portion of the game while dogfighting with bats in the rafters. In another segment, you may accidentally animate an old doll that you will have to fight.

From beginning to end, Presto is designed to have a cinematic quality, with its third-person perspective, extremely detailed environments, and shifting camera angles.

As you'd expect, the characters will be complex. Composed of more than 600 polygons, Presto's behavior and movements will change according to the limb set he's using, and Pulse has used morphing techniques similar to those in *Toy Story* to convey changing facial expressions during close-ups.

Pulse is banking on Presto's emphasis on story, humor, and brain over brawn for widespread market appeal.

"The game will be real whimsical, and if we pull it off right, it will appeal to both adults and kids," says Phill Simon, Presto's producer.

Presto rides a cleverly constructed airplane into the theater rafters.

Original Recipe

Pulse's lineup may not be for everyone, but these upcoming games should at the very least guarantee something new for everyone who plays them. With store shelves bursting with been-there, done-that titles, it's nice to see that there are some truly creative products on the way.

A very small but experienced company with just one title under its belt, Pulse has certainly set some lofty goals for itself. If it meets them, this gamemaker could very well be a household name among gamers everywhere, very soon. ■

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1. No Purchase Necessary. No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. To enter the sweepstakes, print your name and address (including your city, state, and zip code) on a card and mail it to: Space Bunnies Must Die! Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404. Enter as often as you like, but each entry must be mailed separately. All entries must be handwritten. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be postmarked by October 25, 1996. Entries will not be returned. The sponsor and Infotainment World, Inc., assume no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, or misdirected entries.

2. Prizes. Space Bunnies Must Die! prize package grand prize and other prizes will be awarded. Grand prize is valued at less than $500. Winners will be determined at a drawing to be held on October 31, 1996. All prizes will be awarded. Prize winners will be notified by mail by November 30, 1996. To claim your prize, send your winning game piece to Space Bunnies Must Die! Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd, Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

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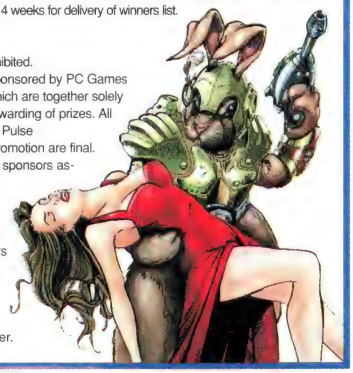

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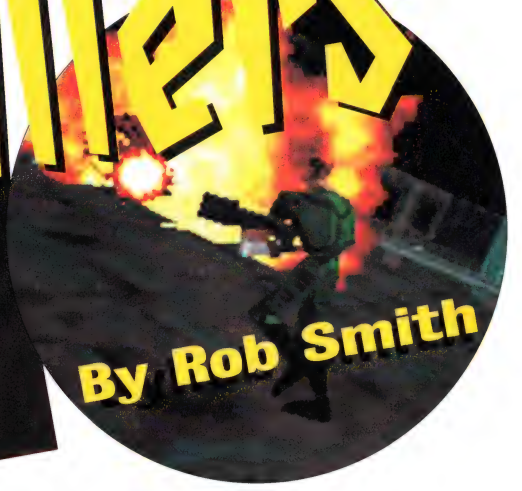
With seven big-name competitors all ready to dethrone the current king of action, things are heating up in the 3D arena.

Quake Killers



By Rob Smith

When Quake shareware arrived, the gaming fraternity went ballistic. Speculation, hearsay, and pure guesswork were over. We finally had something to play; we could make up our own minds. Within days of this momentous event, hordes of ardent gamers were extolling the virtues or condemning the downfalls of the most-hyped game in the history of PC gaming. The bottom line: Does it live up to expectations? Is Quake a Duke killer?

Opinion remains divided, especially depending upon whether you like to play alone or prefer multiplayer contests, but one thing is clear: This is no longer a one-horse race. 3D Realms' Duke Nukem 3D, released months before Quake, set a new standard, and now other development companies are entering the fray. The first-person-perspective battleground is hostile territory, testimony to the stunning effect of Doom and the amount of publicity and cash it made for developer id Software.

What sets these contenders apart is the different approaches they have to what are all, at the end of the day, first-person shooters. Quake, for one, skimmed over the storyline, considering the action and deathmatch opportunities—along with lush graphics and immersive settings—to be of real interest to gamers. 3D Realms, meanwhile, wants to create a cohesive, familiar environment in its upcoming game Prey that is easily recognizable and thus accessible. Then there's Bethesda's SkyNET, which has the popular *Terminator* universe in which to pitch its story. Who's got it right?

You be the judge. We'll take you behind the scenes of some of the upcoming contenders, which will soon be thrown into the melting pot of popular opinion. Can they all survive the heat?

Prey—3D Realms

The first-ever look at the character you will play in Prey—subject to change.

A scene from Duke? Take note of the greater detail in Prey.

The user-friendly "Preditor" will help fans develop the Prey universe.

Based in Garland, Texas, a short distance from id Software's offices, lies the heart of developer Apogee Software. Founded in 1987, Apogee pioneered the concept of shareware games and boasted a number of hugely popular titles, including Wolfenstein 3D and the original side-scrolling Duke Nukem. In 1994, the company created 3D Realms, whose charter was to focus on developing 3D titles. Terminal Velocity was the first product out of the stable, but it was Duke Nukem 3D that put 3D Realms firmly on the map.

Duke Nukem's BUILD engine will get plenty more mileage in the company's upcoming Shadow Warrior, Blood, and Bomb Shell, as well as the Duke Nukem 3D Plutonium Pack add-on. Whether that'll satisfy our insatiable appetite for first-person action or simply flood the market remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: the real development at 3D Realms has to do with an all-new, truly 3D engine. "This new engine's all about realism and dynamism," says William Scarboro, Prey's main engine guru. "It will look beautiful, but you'll also have rooms floating around, spinning hallways—anything you can think of. You'll never go back to static environments again."

The BUILD engine was good for its time, says the Prey team, but it's torture to make it do what a true 3D engine can accomplish easily. With the Prey engine comes the freedom to design whatever the team wants—and the power to pull it off.

Prey for a Story

George Broussard, president of 3D Realms, has a clear view on what the 3D games experience should encompass. "In most games, you run around in a bunch of pretty corridors, flip a few switches, grab a few keys, and get to the exit. In our games, you're in a real place, interacting with real objects. You won't lose your bearings because places are so recognizable. In a Dukematch, you can say, 'Meet you in the movie theater,' and the other player knows exactly where that is. And you can use, push, or blow up nearly everything in the environment."

So a strong, cohesive storyline is vital to the Prey team, although only a few details have been leaked thus far. This is what we can reveal: You are a special investigator delving into the secrets of a cave in the Southwest. You find some sort of device and, through a series of events, find yourself teleported to an alien world. A group of aliens stumbles onto you and abducts you for their sport. You escape their clutches, discover their "horrible secret," and go about sabotaging their plans. (This story, of course, is all subject to change.)

"The stuff you do in Prey is going to matter," says Tom Hall, designer/producer. "It will be interesting and exciting, not just more keys and switches. Every level, you will say, 'Oh, no way—cool!' This game is going to have awesome content, or it's not going out."

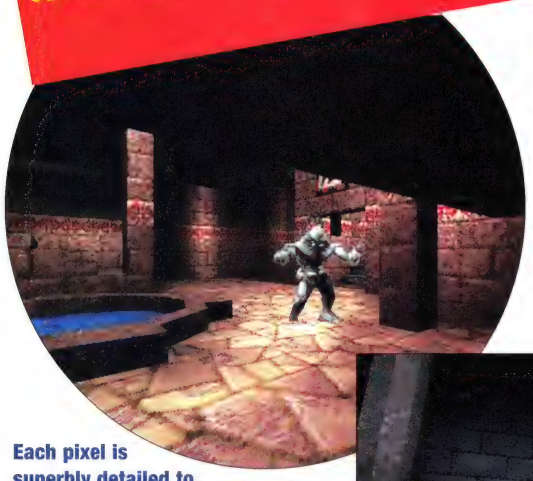
"At one point, you'll actually get into a small fighter and escape a huge ship," says Mark Dochtermann, head programmer. "But you'll have to fly around and knock out the ship's shields to break free. The mixing of gameplay paradigms is going to be very powerful in Prey."

A user-friendly level editor will ship with the game. "I wanted to make it as easy as possible for the level designers to make amazing environments," says "Preditor" programmer Jim Dosé. "The better the tools, the better the end product. Add to this the ability to program your own objects, and users have never been more enabled to create their own world."

For 3D Realms, the Prey and Duke stories fit into a much larger setting with a staggered timeline—Prey comes first, then Duke Nukem, and future projects will fill out the whole setting. "Our goal is to make a coherent universe of characters, sort of like a Marvel Universe," says Scott Miller, vice president of 3D Realms and founder of Apogee. Tom Hall adds: "There are at least 20 races in the universe right now and I'm working out their relationships with one another. The universe is going to be fairly realistic, with aliens inhabiting systems around known stars that would actually support life. It's a little extra work for an effect that probably won't ever creep down into the games, but sometimes it's that attention to detail that can make for a truly credible reality."

Rest assured that the shareware roots that have been the basis for Apogee's rise to prominence won't be discarded with the great commercial pull of big-name titles. With the highest royalty rates in the game industry, the company's dedication to the end product is unquestionable—and that's great news for gamers. Is there any bad news? Just the fact that we aren't going to see Prey until next summer.

Unreal—Epic MegaGames



Each pixel is superbly detailed to create amazing effects.

The power of 24-bit color is seen in this room and the dragons that inhabit it.

A cannon built into this guy's arm should pack a punch.

Epic MegaGames entered the shareware scene in 1991. Eventually, the huge popularity of titles such as platformer Jazz Jackrabbit, Epic Pinball, and frenzied shooter Tyrian put Epic's name on the gaming map. This gave the privately owned company the resources to spend considerable time on its next big project: Unreal.

If you're not amazed by the level of detail in the screen shots of Unreal, then you wouldn't know "impressive" if it jumped up and smacked you in the face. For Unreal's programmers and designers, the look is crucial to creating the atmosphere necessary for compelling gameplay. As such, a great deal of time, effort, and energy have been spent in perfecting an engine featuring full dynamic lighting.

"Good lighting is what makes it," Mark Rein, vice president of marketing at Epic, told *PC Games*. "Every light is made to move, to create such effects as the light cast on water shimmering onto the walls. The effect of flickering torches will be visible on every wall and every character. In addition, you will be able to see the clouds moving and watch the shadows that they cast on the walls."

Development on Unreal began back in November 1993, when James Schmalz, creator of Epic Pinball, built an outdoor world. He drew a castle by hand and rendered it, then digitized and animated a sculpted dragon to fly around it. Thus, the building blocks of the Unreal engine were born. By November 1994, Epic showed these beginnings to Intel, and got involved at the forefront of MMX-powered games development.

Color-Coded

In fact, Unreal is one of the first products to embrace this addition to the Pentium chipset. MMX will bring 24-bit color to the game's graphics—a significant enhancement over the current 8-bit standard. That should really bring those small details in lighting and shadowing to life. The MMX chipset will also enhance the game's sound effects, allowing CD-quality sound without any drop in system performance.

Luckily, you won't need a cutting-edge MMX Pentium to run Unreal. In fact, even the latest in 3D graphics acceleration—soon to be all the rage among techno-savvy gamers—won't improve performance, since the software handles the details of the engine better than hardware. As a native Windows 95 game, Unreal will take advantage of DirectX technologies.

On a Pentium 75, considered to be the minimum requirement, Epic says you'll get high-resolution textures in 640-by-480 resolution that will still be impressive. Compared to Quake, for example, which has a default resolution of 320-by-200, textures should appear more detailed. Of course, that doesn't mean you won't be able to run Unreal in a lower resolution if, for some reason, your machine screams under the weight of expectation and refuses to cooperate at the higher levels.

Early last year, Epic president Tim Sweeney began working on Unreal's level editor. The techniques used for creating lighting, creatures, and objects were already in place, but he needed a tool to put these things together quickly. The editor also needed the flexibility to fine-tune levels, a crucial part of the creation process that could turn a merely decent idea into a gripping, immersive level.

Epic initially contacted Silicon Graphics to see about porting the editor to the SGI platform; however, by the time that move could be arranged, Sweeney had already gotten the editor working quite well in a beta version of Windows 95.

Currently, Epic has designed some 15 levels at various stages of development, with Rein suggesting that the shipping version should include more than 30 full levels. What the company isn't

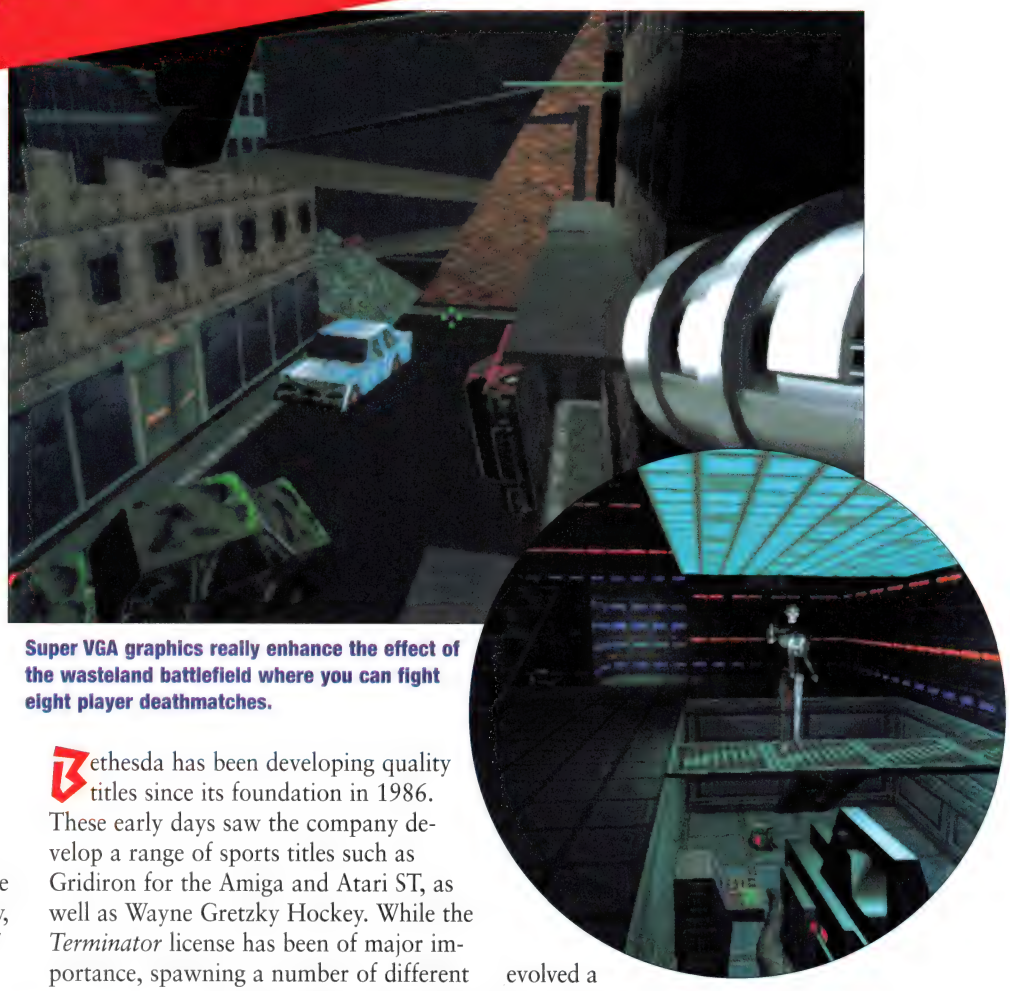
revealing is the storyline. And along with that, it's not divulging certain unique aspects of the gameplay.

Though we'd certainly categorize Unreal as a potential Quake killer, the company doesn't take to the moniker too kindly. As Rein told us: "If we're only compared to Quake, then we've failed in what we're trying to do. We're trying to create levels that you want to keep exploring—not just get to the exit. You won't just encounter bad guys; sure, there will be plenty of things to shoot, but building characters level to level is also important."

From this description, you might think Unreal is a role-playing game, which is definitely not the case. In fact, Rein revealed to us exclusively that an as-yet-unnamed RPG using the Unreal engine is already in development. The team behind the 2D blastfest Tyrian is hard at work on a game set to combine elements of Zelda, Quake, and Myst. A standard isometric view will be choreographed to shift at certain events to take advantage of the 3D engine.

Ultimately, Epic hopes to create a visual masterpiece to hook gamers and to offer a more rounded gameplay experience than the straightforward positioning of Quake. Sadly, you may have to wait until Christmas 1997 to experience something Unreal.

SkyNET—Bethesda Softworks



Super VGA graphics really enhance the effect of the wasteland battlefield where you can fight eight player deathmatches.

Bethesda has been developing quality titles since its foundation in 1986. These early days saw the company develop a range of sports titles such as Gridiron for the Amiga and Atari ST, as well as Wayne Gretzky Hockey. While the *Terminator* license has been of major importance, spawning a number of different incarnations of varying quality, The Elder Scrolls: Arena role-playing game was a huge success.

Terminator: Future Shock brought the battle-scarred landscape of futuristic Los Angeles to the PC, but strictly for a solo player. The planned multiplayer add-on evolved a life of its own, and SkyNET was born. Led by designer/producer Todd Howard and lead programmer Morten Moerup, the SkyNET team has created eight all-new single-player missions, as well as eight devastating battlefields.

The nighttime setting that dominated Future Shock is getting revamped for half of the single-player missions, adding a very different look to these enhanced Super VGA graphics. "We wanted to create a real environment," explained Howard. "Quake is an interior environment, but we feel that having outdoors creates a greater sense of involvement and realism. Basically, the setting is much more alive. And there's roughly a weapon in every building—just like L.A."

SkyNET should be out by the time you read this.

Dodging explosions will be just one of the requirements of staying alive in SkyNET.

XS—Sales Curve Interactive

Enclosed walls in the arena provide few hiding places for your opponents.

Beautifully detailed cut sequences introduce each character and record your finest moments in the arena.

British developer SCI has been producing a steady flow of games over the last few years, with film license *The Lawnmower Man* being one of the most prominent. More recently, the company brought the perpetual conflict of males versus females to the computer in Gender Wars. Likewise, SCI's entry into the Quake-killers stakes also takes a slightly different slant on the first-person shooter. A "gladiatorial simulator" would be a good way to describe the basic idea of XS: A friend's untimely death prompts you to travel to the planet Veridia, where you must compete in a violent tournament in which the victor is awarded a great, mysterious prize.

Like many of its competitors, XS sports a true 3D environment that is populated by polygonal characters and light-sourced texture mapping. XS takes the concept of a Virtua Fighter or Mortal Kombat and brings it into the first-person-perspective genre. Sixty human, cyborg, and machine characters, armed to the teeth and with an attitude bad enough to sour milk from 30 light years away, have congregated on Veridia—and you can step into the shoes of any of them. You'll battle through 20 varied arenas that hide traps, tricks, and guard droids, while dealing with your deadly opponents.

Each brutal character is presented in a full-motion-video cut scene that highlights its strengths, abilities, and weaponry. The game will feature a four-player network option, although when you play solo you will find formidable computer opponents, thanks to the game's high level of AI. Sales Curve Interactive says you'll be able to enter the fray this Christmas.

All the Rest—Including Quake 2

These four contenders aren't the only would-be Quake killers. At press time, there was still little new to learn about two highly anticipated competitors: LucasArts' Jedi Knight and Scavenger's Into the Shadows.

There's also a little sequel called Quake 2, which could be due out around the same time as Prey and Unreal. How does id view the competition, and would it give anything away on what we might expect from the second installment of its masterpiece? Mike Wilson, the company's vice president of marketing, took up the gauntlet in typical id fashion:

"I don't care to speculate other than to say that Quake 2 will be out before most of our so-called competition, and that it will not be a Doom-to-Doom II scenario. Quake 2 will feature all-new monsters with significantly increased polygon counts, all-new weapons and environments, and a whole new storyline. The only thing that will remain the same is the core technology, which is a world ahead of everything known to be in development."

So now you know: The first-person action-game arena is going to reach white-hot proportions before long. Game players of the world, rejoice! ■

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Where No Games Have Gone Before

By Donald St. John and Corey Cohen

The Star Trek universe extends ever deeper into the world of gaming with four new titles on the way. *PC Games* takes you behind the scenes of Star Trek: Borg and Star Trek: Voyager for a sneak peek at what's in store.

30 years. Four series. Nine movies. Conventions, memorabilia, and Web pages galore. Yes, *Star Trek* is entertainment's most durable franchise, and that's rapidly becoming the case for gaming, too. The past 18 months saw no less than three titles (Judgment Rites, Star Trek: Klingon, and Deep Space Nine—Harbinger) for the PC, and the next several months promise to top that. With four titles in the pipeline, Trekker gamers aren't going to lack for anything—except maybe enough time to play them all. *PC Games* recently took a good look at two of them: Simon & Schuster Interactive's Star Trek: Borg and Viacom's Star Trek: Voyager. Here's what we saw.

Borg

Lights are flashing. Smoke is blowing. It's hot as hell. And a tired John de Lancie is working on behalf of every fanatic *Star Trek* gamer in the lower 48.

Not that he's getting his lines right every time. Hey, you try delivering a perfect scene while encased in more than 40 pounds of rubber, complete with a black head attachment glued over your right eye. de Lancie runs through a scene a few times, but clearly he's not sure that he has it. Finally, director Jim Conway calls for quiet for a take...and the maniacal Q takes over. Callously, he brushes aside an attempt to subdue him with a hypospray. "If only you weren't a slave to the collective, you could go back to the *Righteous* and save them—*if only*," Q sneers. Suddenly, it's clear to everyone on the set—Star Trek: Borg is cruising along fabulously.

Menacing bunch of automatons, don't you think?

As Q watches, the action gets hot and heavy in the Borg cube.

The scene is part of an all-video game, the latest in a seemingly endless—yet endlessly popular—stream of offerings that continue to leverage Hollywood's strongest franchise. Star Trek: Borg extends Simon & Schuster's first pass at *Trek*, Star Trek: Klingon, with another first-person action/adventure that pits you against the Federation's most implacable enemies—the communal, machinelike Borg. If you've always been fascinated by these malevolent creatures, you're in for a treat; the game offers the closest look at the Borg universe yet, including a fascinating information-meld showing Trekkers the data stream that represents how the Borg think and communicate.

As such, Borg is an important and irreversible part of the entire *Star Trek* universe, to the extent that producer Keith Halper calls the production an "interactive episode" rather than a game. "Of course, there aren't any of the characters that you're used to, other than Q, because *you're* the main character," he says. "But in feel, we think it fits right into the whole picture."

A faithfulness to *Star Trek* continuity is evident in the use of the crew from the *Voyager* show to conduct the shoot. That's reinforced by the choice of director Conway, a veteran of 13 episodes of *The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine*, and *Voyager*, and writer Hillary Bader, who's scripted eight *TNG/DS9/Voyager* episodes, as well as the Klingon game. Not only is Conway a regular *Trek* director, but he's also a longtime gamer who approached filming with a player's eye.

"For the TV episodes, we shoot in third-person perspective; you never break that wall between the characters and the viewer, and the action is framed farther away," he says with no little glee. "For this, it's deliberately first-person, and I'm able to get right up in your face. I'm doing this for an audience that's 12 inches away; it's much more exciting because I know I've *got* 'em."

In-your-face action is what the game shoots for. You're a Starfleet Academy cadet whose father, an officer on the USS *Righteous*, perished 10 game-years ago in the original human faceoff with the Borg at Wolf 359. You're in your quarters when the ever-mischievous Q shows up and baits you into time-traveling back to try to save your father from his fate. You accept, and hey presto! you're in a Borg cube, that quickly. From there, you have to make plenty of decisions, and—not incidentally—shoot your way out on occasion.

Q is your guide through the game, serving more or less the same function as the holodeck did in ST: Klingon—he gets you where you need to be to start playing. Don't expect an unusual amount of benevolence from him, though; screw up, and you'll land in a heavenly setting, with Q deriding you before he deigns to tell you just what you did wrong. He pops up at odd junctures, wearing his usual assortment of odd costumes...but even when you know he'll be in the Borg cube, it's still jarring the first time you see him.

The CD-ROM reprise of Q is a first for de Lancie, and he sees an acting future in multimedia (for more on his participation in Borg,

Same Time, Different Place

Star Trek: Borg will land on store shelves in November at almost precisely the same time that the new *Trek* movie, *Star Trek: First Contact*, opens nationally in theaters. And the Borg figure in both productions.

That's where the similarity ends, though; the two projects are otherwise unrelated. In fact, while the game employs the same two-piece Borg costumes that have been in use since their first appearance on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s "Q Who" episode, moviegoers will see a sleek new one-piece Borg outfit. There's no Q appearance. And the motion-picture plot doesn't mirror the game at all: the *TNG* crew journeys to late 20th-century Earth to foil a Borg attempt to sabotage the testing of warp drive, the mechanism that led to space exploration and the creation of Starfleet. —*DSJ*

see our Star Talk on page 18). As far as Q goes, though, the game doesn't extend the character too much, says the actor: "Each time I've played the role, there's a story, and each of those 10 times was an opportunity to reveal yet another dimension. This is not the venue to do something like that. There's no kind of emotional revealing that takes place, or finding anything out about me; I'm a facilitator, and therefore act as one."

Although there's only one ultimate ending, the producers are hoping that the number of play paths is more than sufficient for a video game, says Bader.

"It's hopefully longer than the Klingon script; the biggest complaint we found when we went online was that that wasn't long enough," she says. "There are a lot more routes you can take in this one. By the same token, I had to make sure the branches didn't go too far out; if you take 20 minutes on a branch, that's 20 minutes away from the main action."

Although action will be a major part of the gameplay, it's the experience itself that's central to any *Star Trek* game. Halper says that's been paramount in creating Borg: "We felt that for the fans, this needs to be just like you were watching an episode. And our aim is to make that the case." (Simon & Schuster; 800-223-2348; www.ssinteractive.com; $49.95)

Voyager

They've met Q and they'll almost certainly meet the Borg, but TV's *Star Trek: Voyager* crew is no ordinary *Trek* team. Light years from Earth, in their own corner of the universe, this assortment of Starfleet standouts, Maquis rebels, and alien add-ons is a clan with a mission—return home, anyway they can. Along the way, they've faced new races, new places, new rules—new adventure. That's the heart of the show, and to the makers of the upcoming Star Trek: Voyager game, it's what this new title is all about.

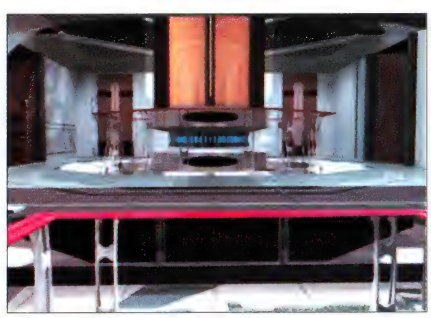
An early rendering of *Voyager*'s Bridge. To ensure authenticity, Looking Glass spent several days sketching every angle of the set.

"I have a goal: to make a game that's accessible to both *Trek* fans and adventure fans," explained Rachel Leventhal, Viacom New Media's producer for the game, during a shoot at Paramount's *Voyager* set. "I think *Voyager's* really managed to nail some of the elements that make *Star Trek* great—like the fact that they're always on a quest, moving from one place to another, and they just want to get home. At the same time, [the audience] really enjoys the journey."

Viacom and developer Looking Glass Technologies are going to great lengths to give gamers the feeling of sharing—and more importantly, controlling—these adventures. Thirteen months into the game's production, they've just finalized a script that's seems written for the show itself.

Split into three episodes, the game starts with a holodeck training mission, where several crew members are cross-training for various positions. The trainees, led by The Doctor, are on their way to gather deuterium when they're hailed by a Talaxian freighter, and the action begins. In the second episode, it's back to reality, as crew members collecting food on an unknown planet are kidnapped by a group of ruthless Kazon. The final episode pits our heroes against an alien doctor who's infected the ship's systems with a form of nano-technology.

To ensure the script's authenticity, the gamemakers consulted *Voyager* writer Lisa Klink, who's written a pair of episodes in the show's first two seasons. But that's only one of the ways they've integrated the game into the



Down in Engineering, you'll see Torres and crew hold the ship together.

Janeway's Ready Room, flowers and all.

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Fire More Phasers

Star Trek: Borg and Star Trek: Voyager may be first to your local gameteria, but there are still more *Trek* game and multimedia products in the works.

Interplay's Star Trek Starfleet Academy is a flight sim that serves up 27 different missions on the original show's bridge simulator, with instruction from Kirk, Chekov, and Sulu. Make it through, and you'll rise from lowly cadet to Starfleet Captain. And if you're feeling nasty, you can choose the path of wickedness and fly as a Klingon or Romulan.

Meanwhile, MicroProse's Star Trek: Generations is based closely on last year's movie. To enhance the gaming experience, it'll feature the voices of William Shatner and Malcolm McDowell as Kirk and Soran, plus the voices of all the *ST: TNG* principals. The game—a combination of first-person-perspective action sequences and a third-person-perspective interface—will include ship-to-ship battles against rebel Klingons, strategy sessions in the Enterprise's stellar cartography lab, and cinematic cut scenes that'll tie everything together.

—DSJ and CC

Is that a new crew member? Actually, it's one of the game designers in an early test of the face-scanning process.

show. Voyager isn't just settling for using the cast's voices, as most of the animated *Trek* games have done; it'll also feature the stars' *faces*. Using a special laser-scanning technique, *Voyager*'s cast members have had smiles, scowls, and other expressions digitized and attached to polygonal models of themselves.

During our visit to the set, we saw the same process being used on *Voyager* extras appearing as the game's various aliens, including the new Gudge race. With the help of some sophisticated motion-capturing, officers and aliens will move as naturally as they would on film. The result: characters who look and sound just like the real thing.

When they're not appearing in the occasional cut scenes, you'll get to guide Janeway, Paris, and the rest through a number of *Trek* situations. Standard conversations will allow you to talk to other characters, controlling one or several at a time. Some of these scenes will take the form of tech sims, where the player will have a toolbox full of *Trek* parts—collectors, emitters, etc.—and have a task like adjusting the sensors or altering the plasma flow. Other characters will guide the person you're controlling through the sim, giving it a truly interactive feel.

If phaser fire is what you're looking for, you'll get that, too. Tense ship-to-ship combat will let you give the kinds of orders Janeway would in the heat of battle: "Raise shields." "Fire photons." "Evasive maneuvers." During some "very stylized" ground combat, you'll tell the team to advance, retreat, lay down a blanket of fire, beam out, and more.

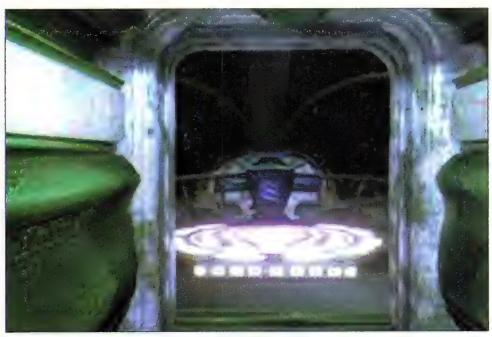
Like much of the game, ground combat will take advantage of a sophisticated team AI that'll let you control multiple crew members at the same time, giving you a better handle on the whole flow of the game. It'll also be very cinematic, with lots of cuts between the two sides, over-the-shoulder shots, and (yeah!) multiple motion-captures of people being struck by phaser fire.

That filmlike quality—the feeling that you're part of a real episode, with all the careful choreography—will be everywhere, including the photorealistic environments in *Voyager* itself. The game's camera AI will be switching views constantly, and with roughly 70 different camera angles on the Bridge alone, you'll get to see every little piece of equipment, officer, and everything else.

Sounds good so far. And Looking Glass' goal of at least 20 hours of gameplay ain't too shabby, either. There's just one more question: Are the companies concerned about the competition?

"Our goal is to make [Star Trek: Voyager] a lot like the TV show," said Alan Dickens, the Looking Glass producer for the game. "It's not like the Generations game—it's not Doom Trek, you're not running around with your phaser out in front of you. It's not the Interplay game, where you're actually flying the ship through space. And unlike Final Unity and Deep Space Nine, you won't be controlling just one character at a time....I believe [the upcoming *Trek* games] are such different games that they'll hit substantially different markets. We feel our use of the license is different enough [that it'll be successful]."

One thing's for sure: Come winter '97, when Voyager's scheduled to ship, there'll be no shortage of rabid gamers and diehard *Trek* fans ready to render a verdict. (Viacom New Media; 800-469-2539; www.viacomnewmedia.com; price not yet available) ■



From this hallway you can see the recreation room aboard a Gudge space station.

As in the show, many big decisions will be made in the Conference Room.

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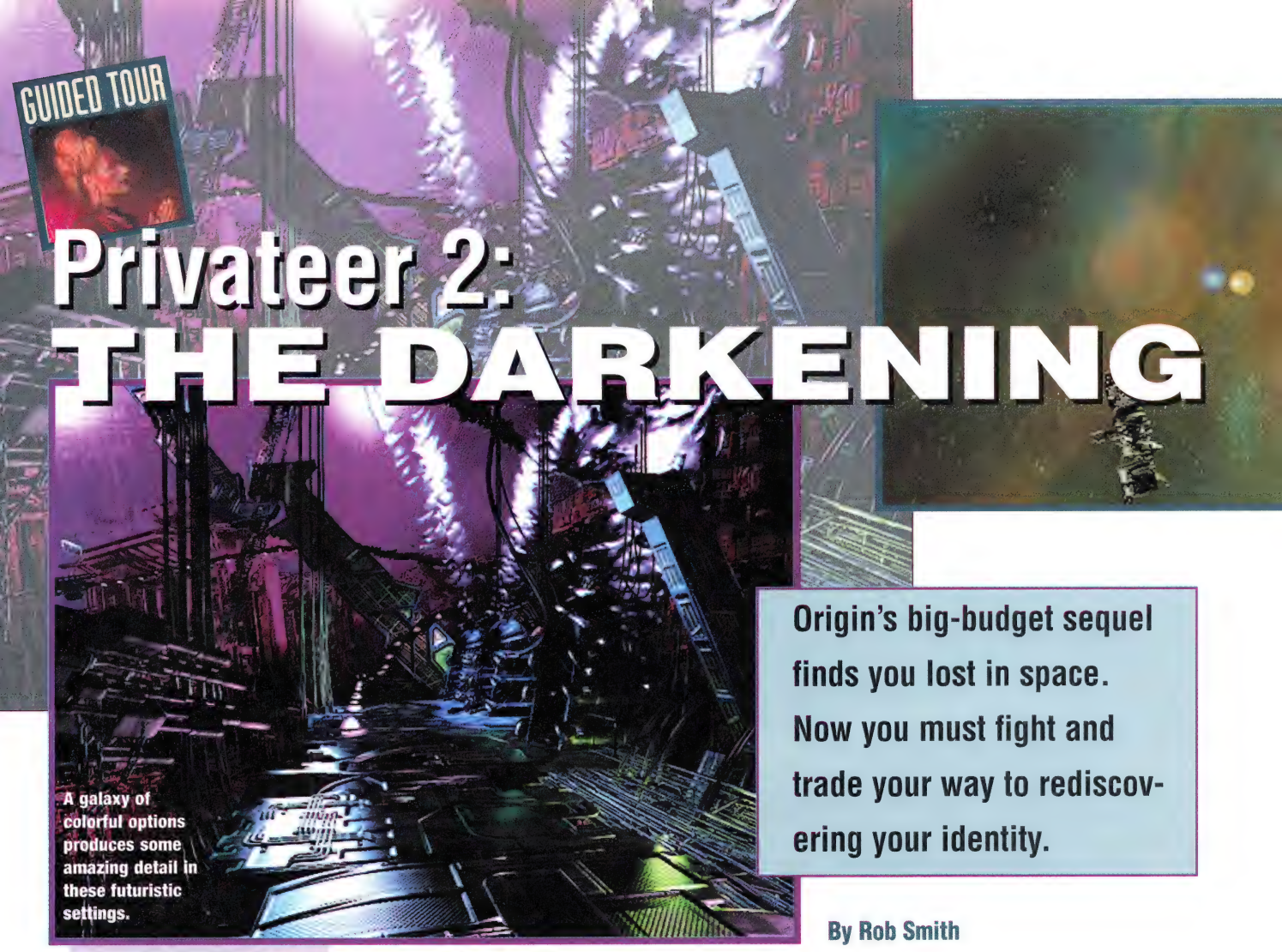


GUIDED TOUR

Privateer 2: THE DARKENING

A galaxy of colorful options produces some amazing detail in these futuristic settings.

Origin's big-budget sequel finds you lost in space. Now you must fight and trade your way to rediscovering your identity.

By Rob Smith

Big-budget projects are nothing new to Origin, the company that brought us such multimillion-dollar extravaganzas as Wing Commander III and IV. Now, Aaron Roberts—brother of Wing III and IV producer Chris Roberts—has been handed the not-inconsiderable sum of $5 million for producing Privateer 2: The Darkening, a space-faring interactive movie that mixes space combat and full-motion-video-based adventure elements and boasts a bevy of big-name Hollywood talent.

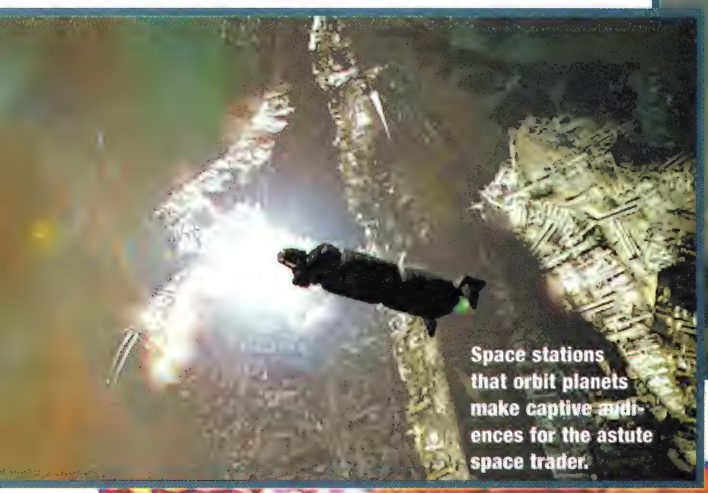
The original Privateer, released in 1993 and re-released under EA's Classic Gold label, was extremely popular, and introduced trading elements to enhance the straight space-combat style of Wing Commander. The ability to buy supplies and upgrade weapons and ships added great flexibility to gameplay. The Darkening builds on these options with the addition of more commodities to trade and more and varied locations to visit, including moons, planets, and space stations. Initially, The Darkening was not scheduled to be billed as a Privateer sequel, but as it evolved, its positioning as a follow-up to the original became more apparent.

Like a Tinseltown production, the game was shot at a studio—Pinewood Studios in Buckinghamshire, England, also home to the sets of *Goldeneye* and the special effects studios for The *Mission: Impossible movie*. The Origin crew descended on Pinewood for six weeks last June; as the programmers and graphic artists rendered images of spaceships and prepared backgrounds for some of The Darkening's bluescreen sections, the cast and crew filmed the interactive portions on 30 custom-built sets. Detailed sketches of the sets were brought to life using typical Hollywood tricks, such as repeated mirrors creating the effect of a vast corridor in a space actually no longer than 20 feet.

Starring as Lev Arris, the main character, is acclaimed British actor Clive Owen (see sidebar, page 58). He's supported by John Hurt (*1984, Scandal*), Brian Blessed (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*), Jurgen Prochnow (*Beverly Hills Cop II, Dune*), Amanda Pays (*Max Headroom*), David McCallum (*The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*), and the ubiquitous Christopher Walken. Overall, an impressive array of talent.

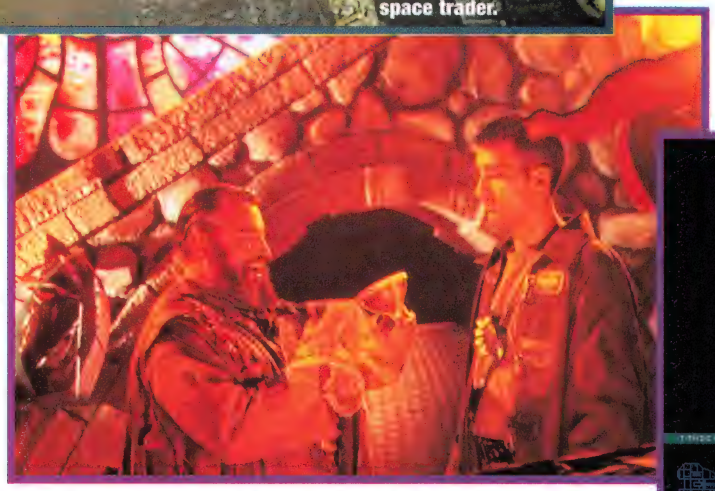
The storyline begins with Lev abruptly awakening in a hospital from a cryogenic sleep. He'd originally gone off to slumberland because he contracted an incurable disease, but now he's got an even bigger problem: amnesia. First on the agenda is sorting out the truth about his rescue from the mangled wreckage of a spacecraft. As usual, he must answer the questions "Who am I? Where was I going? What was I doing?"

This vague backstory gives you a huge amount of freedom to go wherever you want to and do whatever you want to during



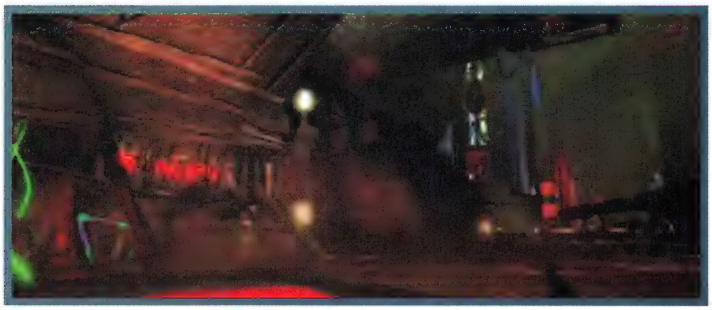
Space stations that orbit planets make captive audiences for the astute space trader.

Each world is rendered in stunning detail.



Brian Blessed appears his typically jovial self as he meets with your character, Lev Arris.

An enemy gets blown into space dust with a few well-placed shots and the help of stingray torpedoes. Upgrading your weapons systems is one way to survive in hostile territory.



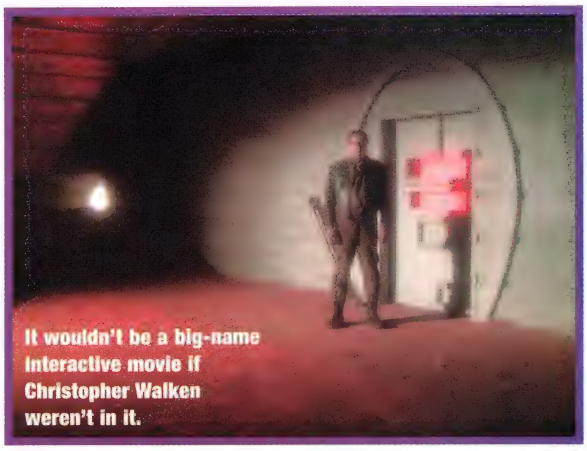
Hi-res backdrops make wandering around these locations an aesthetic pleasure.

Here you can see the advantages of building custom sets rather than using bluescreen technology, with its attendant jagged, black outlines. Notice the seamless integration of characters and settings.

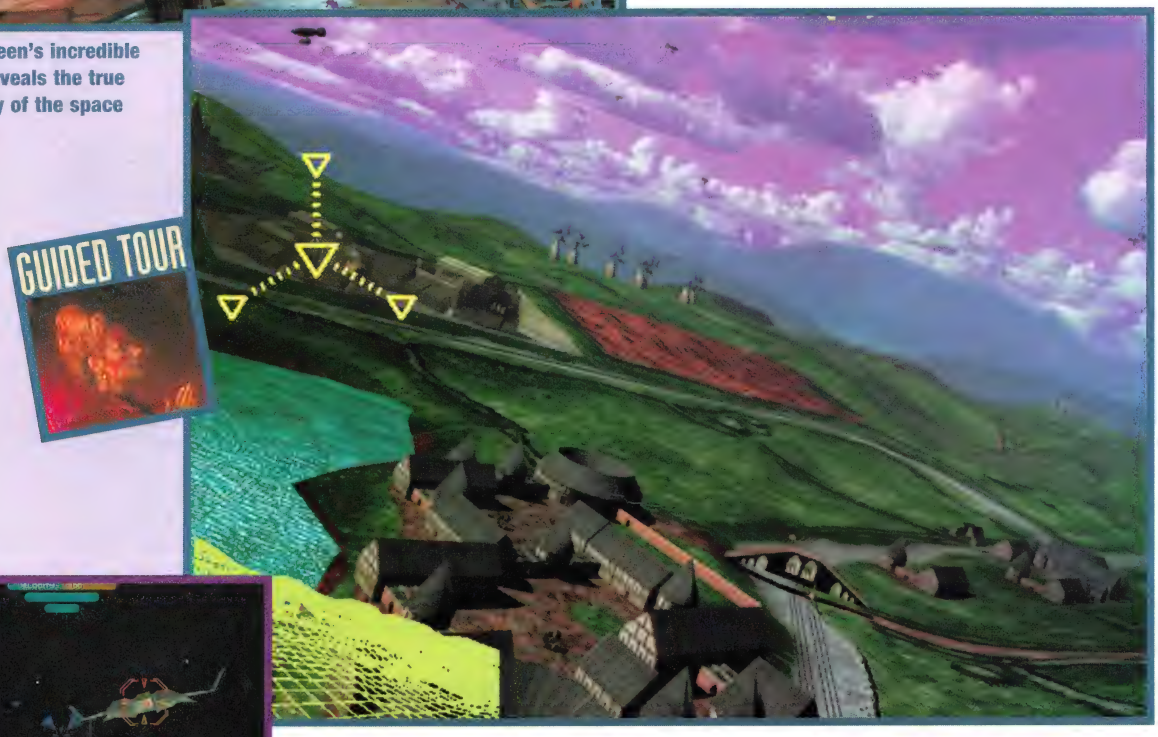
the game. Of course, your ultimate goal is to learn the truth about yourself, but the manner in which you do so can vary dramatically. Once equipped with some form of transport, the stars are yours for the exploring, and hundreds of missions are at your disposal.

Lev's blank slate of a mind is yours to fill however you see fit. If you like hostage-rescue missions or relief operations become available, the benevolent Lev can emerge. But if assassinations and delivery of dodgy merchandise are enticing, you can play Privateer that way. With such a wide variety of missions and personalities to choose from, the game's replay value is tremendous. It won't be over until all the mysteries surrounding Lev's past and present have been fully explored. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; www.ea.com/origin/html; DOS CD; $50–$60; game scheduled to ship this month)

This screen's incredible detail reveals the true enormity of the space dock.



It wouldn't be a big-name interactive movie if Christopher Walken weren't in it.



Missions may also require you to fly against hostile enemies over the contours of a planet's superbly detailed surface.

You'll spend plenty of time in space combat, as when you try to stop these bandits from capturing your goods.

Up Close With Clive Owen

British actor Clive Owen isn't a familiar name or face to the U.S. public, but he is quite well known in the UK, having starred in a popular TV series called *The Chancer* and in the movie *Close My Eyes*. We spoke to Owen about The Darkening during a break from filming at Pinewood Studios.

PC Games: How did filming The Darkening differ from film and TV work?

Clive Owen: There aren't many differences, really. The most fundamental difference is that at the end of scenes, you have to shoot alternative choices to relate to the player's choice in the game. But even that uses the same processes as movie work.

Clive Owen—in action!

PCG: So what prompted your interest and involvement in this project?

CO: Well, I'm computer illiterate–I don't own a computer and I don't play computer games. The Darkening was the first game of its kind to be filmed in Europe, so it was the perfect opportunity for me to find out about this business.

continued on page 60

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—STEVEN GREENLEE, COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

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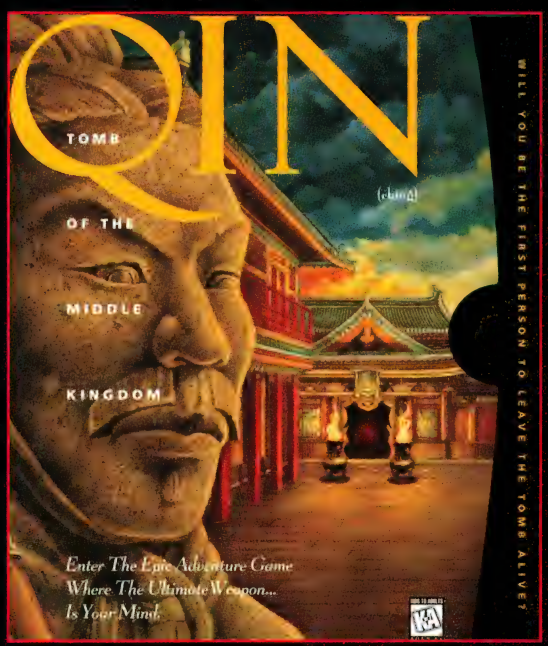
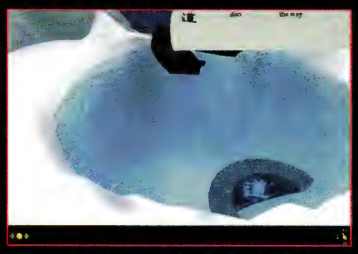


SOLVE PUZZLES AND AVOID TRAPS AS YOU FIND YOUR WAY TOWARD MULTIPLE GAME ENDINGS.



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WINDOWS CD-ROM

TOUR QIN ON THE INTERNET AT
HTTP://PATHFINDER.COM/TWEP/PRODUCTS/QIN

Distributed by WEA Visual Entertainment and Warner Books

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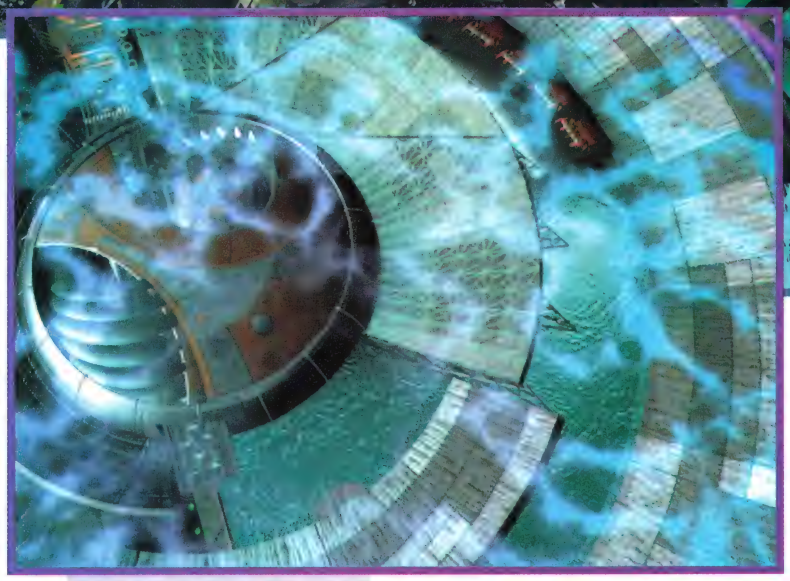
Does this look like a photo? Did Origin actually use the $5 million to send someone to a strange moon world? Could be...

The flight control interface of your space craft is sufficiently different to avoid direct comparison to the Wing Commander engine.

Bizarre worlds are a visual treat—and potentially tricky environments to negotiate.



The great variety of world types gives you plenty of choices.

Lighting and camera angles are all worked out with the precision of a full Hollywood production to achieve the desired effects.

continued from page 58

***PCG*: Is it more difficult to play a character who doesn't follow one specific direction?**

Clive Owen's brooding, querying look works well as Lev seeks to discover who he really is.

***CO*: There's a different approach, because a game is broken down more than a movie in the script–a movie has fewer subplots to become involved with than a game. As a result, you treat each section separately, but once a few decisions about the character have been made, you just apply those aspects to each individual scene.**

***PCG*: With segmented filming, how does the atmosphere feel on set and how does that relate to relationships with the other actors?**

***CO*: It's harder to develop relationships, because usually you all build up the event and see the project through to the end together. With The Darkening, the most time any of the actors spent together was three days. With such a great cast, though, it's easy to get the atmosphere going to generate continued interest.**

PCG: So from the actor's point of view, is making an interactive movie fun?

***CO*: Yeah, it's been one of the most enjoyable shoots I've ever done. It's also hard work; there were many different scenes and scripts to include in the filming, so it was approached with the same level of commitment as any other [project]. And the EA boys have been great–just as professional as any film team I've worked with in the past.**

"ABSOLUTE GARBAGE."

—Slime Magazine

"PURE TRASH."

—Ratweek

"P.U."

—The Daily Urinal

"IT STINKS."

—The Sunday Compost

"TWO THUMBS UP (OUR NOSES)."

—Fungus & Mildew

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

For PC and MAC CD-ROM and PSX.

"WE COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER OURSELVES."

— The Blubs

The Blubs, your average family of space aliens, are in a heap of trouble. They've crash-landed in a garbage dump and need you to help them put their ship back together so they can get back home to their less odorous planet. That is, before a gang of intergalactic bank robbers can get ahold of them. Find out why the critics are calling *Down in the Dumps* the funniest, best-looking and smelliest 3D graphic adventure game ever to (dis)grace a computer screen.

PHILIPS

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A LIST

The PC Games A List includes the top 20 titles that we've rated as either an A or A- (or the equivalent) in 1996. See the complete 1996 and 1995 A Lists at www.pcgamesmag.com.

Afterlife

Screamer

Afterlife

Outrageous humor and stunning graphics make this SimCity clone heavenly. (LucasArts; 800-782-7927; DOS/Win 95 CD; $54.95)

AH-64D Longbow

For serious chopper-sim aficionados, Longbow's a must-buy. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)

Azrael's Tear

Meet the Knights Templar in this beautiful, sensible, and well-balanced adventure. (Mindscape; 800-234-3088; DOS CD; $44.99)

Bad Mojo

Love it or hate it, you've never played an adventure game as a cockroach before. (Pulse Entertainment; 310-264-5579; Win CD; $54.95)

Civilization II

A wonderfully compelling upgrade of the strategic conquest classic. (MicroProse; 800-695-4263; Win CD; $48.99)

Duke Nukem 3D

King of the first-person action shooters—at least for the moment. (FormGen; 800-367-6436; DOS CD; $39.99)

Fantasy General

The newest entry in the General series offers solid wargaming from start to finish. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $50)

MissionForce: Cyberstorm

Turn-based strategy games don't get much better than this. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win CD; $59.95)

Monty Python & the Quest for the Holy Grail

Outrageous adventure that's perfect for Python fans. (7th Level; 800-979-8466; Win/Win 95 CD; $49.95)

Mortal Kombat 3

The best home version of the classic arcade fighting game. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; DOS CD; $55)

The Pandora Directive

Tex Murphy returns in this engaging sequel to Under A Killing Moon. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; DOS/Win 95 CD; $49.95)

Screamer

This PC racer gives console driving games a run for their money. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $54.95)

The Settlers II: Veni, Vidi, Vici

This strategy sequel is as fascinating as the original Serf City, and much better-looking. (Blue Byte; 800-933-2983; DOS CD; $59.95)

Silent Hunter

An addictive submarine simulation that blends technical seamanship with visceral thrills. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $55)

Su-27 Flanker

Perfect for serious flight-sim junkies; newbies, beware. (SSI; 800-601-7529; Win 95 CD; $55)

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

Awesome sound effects and a compelling story help make Terra Nova the most immersive combat experience around. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Still the best strategy game—and one of the best games—around. Period. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $50)

Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal

More great Warcraft II excitement with 24 new scenarios. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; $30)

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom

Everything you could ask for in a Fly & Drive game—and then some. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $55)

Zork: Nemesis

The latest Zork once again redefines adventure gaming. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS/Win 95 CD; $49.95)

How We Rate Games

PC Games uses a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone who's gone to school knows what our grades mean without resorting to an in-depth explanation or clever chart: an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in five key areas.

Gameplay: How good are the game's interface and control scheme, and how much fun is it to play?

Getting Started: How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)

Graphics: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?

Sound Check: How good are the game's sound effects and musical score, and how well do they fit the game?

Overall Grade: Taking everything into account, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

The world is 71.04% covered by water.
Until they arrive October 3rd.
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Promising heavy metal

iM1A2 Abrams: America's Main Battle Tank

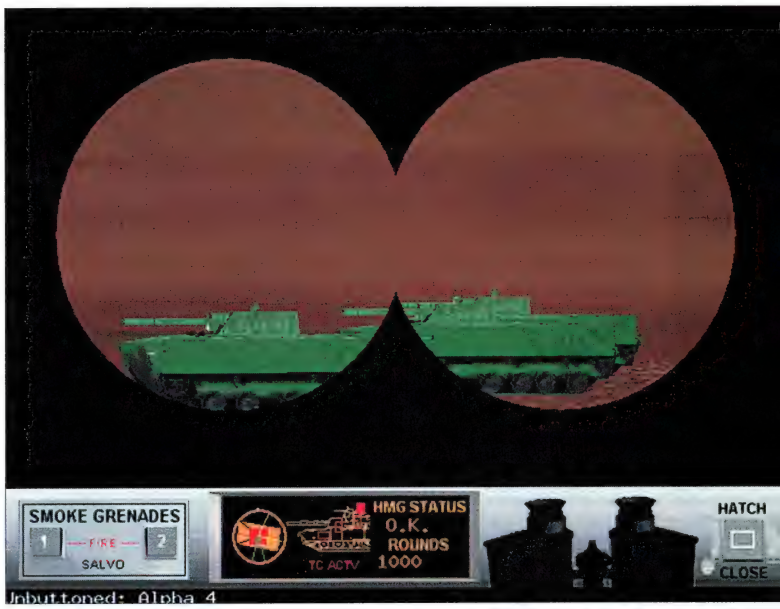
PLAY the Demo on the disc

By Steve Klett

For some strange reason, the tank has been virtually ignored in the world of sims. There are very few recent tank games worthy of mention, other than Armored Fist—and that's stretching it. In fact, for most tank-sim aficionados, MicroProse's old classic M1 Tank Platoon still reigns supreme.

Well, M1 vets, take heart, because a replacement is on the way that promises to be every bit as good. It's Interactive Magic's iM1A2 Abrams, and why are we confident it will be a quality steel-monster sim? Maybe because it's coming to you from two of the same folks responsible for M1: MicroProse co-founder "Wild" Bill Stealy and Arnold Hendrick, M1 designer.

Due for release in October; iM1A2 simulates modern America's main battle tank, the Abrams, which is one sophisticated instrument of mass destruction. Rest assured, I-Magic and developer Charybdis Enterprises are working hard to make it as realistic as possible.



Multiple views add to the realism.

You'll have access to a wide range of controls that are modeled after the real thing, including night vision/thermal views; the tank commander's integrated TV for weapons, target, and situational views; and multiple types of ammunition for your 120mm gun, including MPAT anti-helicopter rounds. And you'll be able to control all the action from the driver, gunner, and tank-commander positions. There's also a variety of external, third-person views.

The graphics are still awaiting final touches, but are shaping up quite nicely. Here you see a helicopter falling to the iM1A2's guns.

The detailed 3D vehicles and textured terrain should be excellent fun to blow up!

iM1A2 isn't merely a tank sim; it's a modern warfare sim of combined-arms tactics. You'll interact with forward observer reconnaissance vehicles, air support, air defense, and various infantry fighting vehicles as you command a single tank, platoon of four tanks, or an entire company team. For those last two modes, you'll issue fire, formation, and movement orders—in real-time—via a overhead strategic map of the battlefield. You can also choose to manage company resources (replacements, provisions, etc.) or let the computer do it for you.

The game gives you three campaigns to conquer, set in such popular tourist sites as Iran, Bosnia, and the Ukraine, so the game terrain will range from wide-open desert to mountain steppes. Along the way, you'll shoot it out with your typical array of Russian military vehicles, all modeled in 3D: T-90 and T-95 main battle tanks, Hind helicopters, and various armored infantry vehicles.

Like I-Magic's Apache, iM1A2 will offer both arcade and realistic modes of play, so if you just want to drive around in a big hunk of metal and blow up things, you can. There's also a quick-start option that puts you in the thick of things with a click of a button.

This sim is looking very promising, indeed. Is it the next Tank Platoon? The talent is certainly there to pull it off. At the very least, it's not another F-22 sim. Oh wait—I-Magic's working on one of those, too...

iM1A2 Abrams
Interactive Magic
800-283-3542
www.imagic.com

Developer: Charybdis Enterprises
Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: Mid-October

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Carnage gets a makeover

Eradicator

By Daniel Morris

So what else is there? You've smashed imps as a space leatherneck, reclaimed off-world mine shafts from menacing robots, and made those alien bastards pay for shooting up your ride. Is it safe to say that the first-person shoot-'em-up craze has left you a little winded?

Sure, but as they say in Tinseltown, this genre has legs. With Quake out and a host of others knocking on the door, Accolade will toss its hat—or rather, grenade—into the ring with Eradicator. Playable from a traditional first-person perspective or a chase view, Eradicator offers a choice of three characters with which to enter into combat. Dan Blaze is your standard Duke type (he's even got a red shirt), but for those with slightly broader horizons, there's also the curvaceous Eleena and the reptilian Kamchak.

Blaze through mazes from either a first-person or third-person perspective.

Your rich bag of mayhem dispersal includes a rapid-fire grenade launcher.

This mechanized enemy's about to receive a napalm bath.

Your weapon is a single multi-tasking firearm with which you can select a wide variety of destructive devices. It's a laser, flamethrower, grenade launcher, napalm thrower, missile launcher, and dispenser of crawling, exploding spider-bots—all in one lethal package. Sigourney Weaver couldn't feel more at home.

There's a lot to do in these levels, too. The mission objectives are a little more varied than the typical "blast your way to the exit" scenario. There are alarms to be deactivated, conveyor belts to be followed, and, as always, bad guys to be fragged. But unlike many such games, Eradicator rewards stealth and ingenuity almost as much as it does trigger-happiness; a surprising amount can be accomplished without firing more than a few shots.

Patrol Eyes, floating eyeballs with wriggling optic nerves attached, serve as sentries. If they spot you, they'll make a beeline for the nearest alarm switch. Taking them out quickly and quietly will ensure a low profile. If the alarm is sounded, you've got to find the override switch (never easy) and call off the alarm before a flood of ickyness comes to get you.

The monsters in need of eradication are some of the creepiest ever to infest a perfectly homey dungeon. By turns gruesome and insectlike, they inspire a genuine loathing and motivation for the slaughter. There's some mechanized death to face as well, as in one level where monstrosities are churning out killer robots in an automated factory.

The alpha version we played had some glitches in the third-person view (it kept wanting to switch to first-person), but was generally a well-constructed walkthrough. Networkable for up to eight players, Eradicator offers deathmatchers a few new toys to play with. Lay proximity mines to slow pursuers. If you're doing the chasing, launch a spider-bomb and let it do the work, crawling as it seeks an enemy and then detonating when it finds one.

Eradicator is also a very playable solo contest in the levels we looked at. The mazes are treacherous and easy to get lost in, with a good deal of puzzle-solving needed to advance from location to location (i.e., finding and crippling a forcefield generator, then finding and bypassing the forcefield gate before the generator repairs itself).

There are more than a few graphics snags to overcome before its release, and a lot more work needed to get the chase view up to scratch, but Eradicator may manage to swing the increasingly difficult feat of adding some innovations to the standard shoot-'em-up.

Eradicator
Accolade
800-245-7744
www.accolade.com

Platform: DOS CD
Available: October

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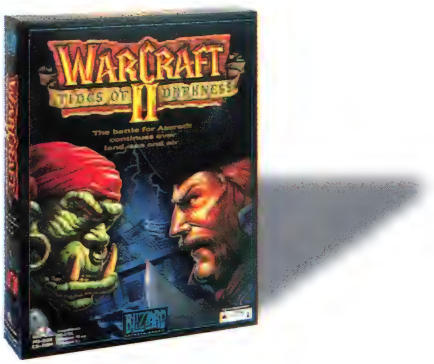
Game of the Year.



#1 Selling PC Game, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award,** Computer Game Review• **Game of the Year,** Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game,** C/NET

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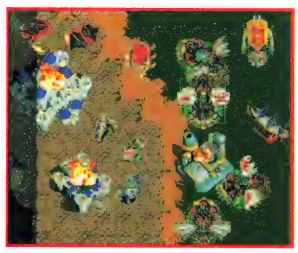

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Game of the Month

Prepare to be amazed

Quake

By Rob Smith

See Quake Strategy Guide, pg. 108, and Quake Cheats, pg. 118!

Only get this close to the Vore if you're armed with the Ring of Shadows, which makes you invisible.

The incredible amount of hype leading up to Quake made its release the single biggest event in the history of the game industry. The deathmatch alpha test (Qtest) was quickly forgotten when the eight levels of episode one made their shareware debut. But even then there was no knowing what the three remaining episodes would bring. New monsters were waiting in the wings, and a new weapon was there to greet them.

As a shareware offering, the first episode, Dimension of the Doomed, was a not-to-be-missed experience—and one that served to fuel even higher expectations for the final, full version of the game.

A quick recap on the story may be in order: A bad guy code-named Quake is using government-created "slipgates" to send creatures through space and time to wreak havoc. You must go find and stop him/her/it.

Whew! That's out of the way. The important story is that you are dumped into a quite stunningly detailed true 3D environment with a shotgun, your wits, and the speed of your trigger finger for company. Oh, and a whole bunch of these crazy bad guys, too.

Stained glass windows and flickering torches create a spooky atmosphere.

Entering the full version for the first time, with all four portals waiting to be explored and conquered, is an exciting prospect. Ignoring the first episode, since it's been played a thousand times (well, quite a few, anyway), the Realm of Black Magic beckons. To set the scene: From the entrance, you walk up the stairs, through an ornately detailed archway, and are met by the slogan "Ancient Castles and Strange Beasts Ahead." As if you hadn't guessed that already.

Plunging into the slipgate, the scene that first confronts you is surprisingly and disappointingly familiar. Background colors and textures are all akin to the shareware episode's style. Is there nothing new here? Fortunately, after your initial encounter with The Enforcer—a laser-wielding, armor-clad grunt—you realize things aren't quite the same.

The Death Knights' flaming arrows are hard to dodge.

One of the first impressions to hit home is the impact of the soundtrack. Having survived on just the sound effects in the shareware, the Trent Reznor/Nine Inch Nails score is another exciting addition. Atmosphere is key in Quake, and Reznor's done a terrifyingly good job of creating the haunting "music" that accompanies your journey. Each episode boasts its own unique style, ranging from a harrowing pounding of drums to a screeching, genuinely scary "industrial horror" cacophony. The tempo is definitely heartbeat rather than upbeat, as befits a scenario in which death lurks around each and every corner.

Episode three, The Netherworld, is tagged with the promise of "Primal Fear in a Strange Dimension," and it delivers. A change in style is evident with some unique level designs, traps, and tricks. As with episode two, there are six normal levels and a secret level populated with the usual array of monsters.

On the subject of monsters, the Enforcers may simply be beefier versions of the Grunts, but the Vore—a spider-like, hissing monstrosity—is really tough to kill, and deadly to boot. Its insidious homing missile makes slugging it out toe-to-toe a bad idea. Death Knights add a flaming arrow

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Stunning light sourcing makes it a must to fire rockets into darkened rooms just for the hell of it.

A Vore lurks in the shadows, and if you see that bolt heading in your direction, you know the fat lady is clearing her throat.

weapon with a wide field of fire to their sword-wielding proficiency, and rock-hard armor allows them to take quite a hammering before finally capitulating. The surprise package, though, is the Spawn—a blue, bloblike creature that moves incredibly fast once startled and explodes when it either smashes into you or is peppered with ammo.

Once you reach episode four, The Elder World, the heat is intense. The legend "Your Worst Nightmares Come True" is no exaggeration: Even on the Easy level, this is one challenging episode; played on Hard, its mix of tough monsters, missiles thrown from every direction, and chaotic mazes has been known to make grown men in the office cry!

Overall, Quake's levels can become difficult to navigate: many of the walls look the same, and, with no automap function, it's impossible to tell exactly where you have and haven't explored. Getting lost is a distinct possibility.

So this long-awaited full version has new monsters, a new weapon (the lightning gun, which shoots a rod of electrical current, frying anything in its path), and a cool soundtrack. What doesn't it have?

Well, there are no new end-of-episode bosses (just Chthon at the end of the first episode); no amazingly different look or feel; no surprising variations, such as the Ziggurat Vertigo (E1-M8) with its crazy gravity; and still no feeling for your character: he's just some anonymous Rambo with a helmet.

But the game engine is so finely crafted and makes getting into the totally immersive atmosphere so easy that many of these criticisms become insignificant. Setting the video options to best view the stunning scenery is simplicity itself, and the console command line makes accessing cheats and more expert functions a breeze.

Even the potential minefield of multiplayer gaming is easy to set up. Six specially designed deathmatch levels, incorporating updated and slightly adjusted versions of the three previously released alpha test levels, are full of fragfest opportunities. Of course, any of the other 32 levels can be used in multiplayer games, and may indeed be more suitable when pushing the boundaries of a 16-player game.

There's no doubting that Quake lacks certain features gamers may have become used to from other first-person games, like the ability to crouch. But there is certainly nothing to match the intensity, the immersivenes, and the sheer playability of the single-player game. Who cares who this guy is? The complete sensory overload that Quake offers makes it the ultimate gaming experience.

If Quake were a painting, it would be the Mona Lisa. If it were a car, it would be a Rolls-Royce. Or, to put it in the terms of modern parlance, Quake rocks.

The full 3D environment lets you deliver death from any angle.

As two deathmatchers battle it out, creep up, steady aim, then claim the frag.

Quake
id Software
800-434-2637
www.idsoftware.com

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: Pentium 60, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, sound card
List price: $45

GAMEPLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A+
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A

Pretenders may lay claim to the crown, but Quake reigns supreme.

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And it definitely isn't Waterloo.

Download the interactive preview at www://interplay.dragonplay.com

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done with a body like this.

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Available on PC and Macintosh CD Rom

Virtua Fighter PC

In other incarnations, Sega's Virtua Fighter has been one of the better fighting games around. Born again as a PC port, it serves as another example of the damage most console fighting games sustain when they brave that treacherous bridge to the computer.

Virtua Fighter PC's only noticeable differences—slower speed and sluggish controls—are for the worse. Visually, the game looks good and is comparable to its console forebear. But there are pronounced and aggravating hiccups in the actual play.

That's too bad, because Virtua Fighter has always been the one game that actually looked like a real fight; the punches, kicks, and throws are as genuine-looking as can be (minus an occasional somersaulting flip—but hey, this is entertainment, right?). The fierceness and physics of hand-to-hand combat are as faithfully rendered here as in any fighting game. But the lag in gameplay puts it to waste.

Virtua Fighter PC
Sega
800-733-7288
www.segaoa.com

Developer: SegaSoft
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 90, Win 95, 8MB RAM
List Price: $49.95

GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B

OVERALL: C+

A classic console game suffers in its slower, less responsive PC translation.

Virtua Fighter PC's graphics are a treat—when they're moving at full speed.

We play fighting games to release our frustration, so who needs the teeth-grinding consternation of waiting, with your fighter in mid-air, for a frozen screen to uncork itself?

And we didn't exactly test it out on a sluggish machine. Our Pentium 166 was the only system that could adequately move the thing along. Sega recommends a P133 or faster. 486 owners need not apply unless they're interested in a playable screen-saver.

Responsiveness also suffered in the translation. Because the action is beset with pauses and lags, it's often hard to time moves and land blows. Add slow speeds to unresponsive controls and you've really shackled the gameplay.

Although considerably stiffer than in the console version, the visuals are still striking. With a horse of a Pentium and a little bullet-biting, Virtua Fighter PC can be played and enjoyed. But it adds some more weight to the often rocky marriage between PCs and fighting games. — *Daniel Morris*

THINK BEFORE YOU OBLITERATE.
Forget the juvenile approach, this sci-fi mission takes strategic planning. It's simple; follow your objectives and live to fight another nanosecond. Perhaps. As death doesn't play by the rules.
Fly the trial version designed for Windows 95 with multiplayer capabilities.
HELLBENDER™
www.microsoft.com/games/hellbender/
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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Xenophage: Alien Bloodsport

By Daniel Morris

Tired of throwing fists and elbows? Xenophage offers fighting fans the opportunity to throw tentacles, mandibles, and other assorted alien weirdness at each other. It's not called "Alien Bloodsport" for nothing.

With the exception of the game's two human characters, the combatants in Xenophage are a motley collection of '50s B-movie freaks. And each brings a snarled, slimy, slobbering set of dangers to the arena.

Aside from the extraterrestrial nature of the antisocial behavior on display here, the most remarkable thing about Xenophage are the gigantic sprites; the fighters sometimes seem to fill the entire screen. This makes for some whopping, industrial-size fisticuffs.

These fighters are BIG.

And this game's even got a story. Lumberjack Nick and office-worker Selena are abducted in a blinding flash of light and transported to a gigantic spaceship whose remote pilots are members of a cheesy intergalactic council that demands violent entertainment. The stakes: the winning species will retain propagation rights. Hell's bells! With that kind of incentive, Nick and Selena dive right into the fray.

Selena versus...What is that?

Of course, you're not limited to the human combatants alone. There are six other warriors from bizarre races ready to throw down. Most are variations on some ghastly earthly fauna, like scorpions, bats, and lizards.

We doubt you've seen fighting like this before.

There's some truly creative mayhem to partake of. Latch onto a foe and impale him/her/it with incisors, tearing at his throat in a blood-spewing frenzy. Drill him with a beak shaped like a power tool. Or just slap him around a bit with your tentacles before falling back on the time-honored piledriver.

The match ends when one fighter dies, but that's not the end of the carnage. An Overkill feature allows for post-mortem humiliation, so that once you've taken your buddy's life, you can take his pride. Stomp on the corpse or just kick it around like a cat does a mouse. You even collect extra points for dishing it out.

As violent as all this may seem, there's really not much of a grossout factor at work here. The violence is too sci-fi strange to have any stomach-churning effect, and the gore is rendered on screen as more of the "superimpose a blood spurt over the fighter" variety. Violencewise, there's nothing here that the K.A. console crowd hasn't seen before.

The five levels of solo difficulty run the gamut from laughably easy to downright impossible. On the easier settings, you'll be faced with only one tournament-ending boss to overcome, the capering Parasite. He's not much trouble. But as you advance through the difficulty levels, you'll have to figure out a way past two bosses and then a hidden Champion who'll slap you silly 40 or 50 times before you can even guess how to put up a fight.

With no save feature and only three resurrections (the game's fancy-schmancy term for continues), that means solving the tourney each time. Here's where the gamer receives yet another lesson on the limited value of fighting games as solo entertainment.

Head-to-head, Xenophage plays nicely. Two players can go at it on a single machine, or you can play over a network/modem. The graphics are smooth and flawless in the thick of the fight, and though the game is played from the typical profile view, the camera is still able to do a little bobbing and weaving without distracting or slowing the frame rate.

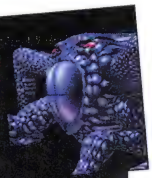
It's increasingly tough to bring anything new to side-view fighting, but Xenophage carries a few new goodies to play with. It stacks up as a very playable beat-'em-up, if nothing out of this world.

Stuff

You need tips on how to fight? You nancy-boy...

- **Squid possesses a devastating flying head-butt attack that can stun even a boss with one hit.**
- **Wait until the bad guy is stunned before attempting your arm's-reach special move. Otherwise, you're almost guaranteed to take a hit.**
- **Demoralize your buddy by denigrating his manhood while you play.**
- **Dislodge his gamepad from its port while he goes for chips.**
- **For the risk-takers out there, charging with Bat's drill beak can deliver a bout-ending blow. Of course, you can't block during the charge, and once you start it, you're committed.**

Xenophage: Alien Bloodsport



FormGen
800-367-6436

Developer: Argo Games
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM
List Price: $39.95–$49.95

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B

A solid fighting game with a ton of window dressing.

Real-time mayhem at its best

Z

By Steve Klett

Brad and Allen will party anytime, any place.

Mix C&C with capture-the-flag, throw in some excellent artificial intelligence, take out the building phase, add more than a pinch of humor, and you've got Z, a real-time wargame from The Bitmap Brothers and Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

We've been drooling for this game ever since we got our first sneak peek at it more than a year ago. Given our high level of anticipation, we were a little afraid to boot up our reviewable copy; expectations are so often met with a letdown when you see the final product. The Bitmap Brothers, you see, had made some lofty claims about the quality of the final game's AI. Thankfully, they took the time to ensure those claims were met. Simply put, Z is an excellent, addictive, and immensely entertaining game.

PC GAMES A LIST

Z's greatest strength is not its story. You're enlisted by one General Zod—a mechanical leader who seems to have watched *Apocalypse Now* one time too many and thinks he's Robert Duvall. Zod wants you to help him kick some enemy robot butt through 20 levels of non-stop action. Exactly who are you fighting and why, and why's this game called Z, anyway? Don't know, and the game never tells you. Z is about good, simple, challenging wargaming, not storytelling. And remember, good soldiers never reason why....

All those bits flying about the screen used to be your tank.

The story may be shallow, but it's certainly not devoid of humor—it has that in spades. Numerous cut scenes are spread throughout the game depicting the colorful antics of two robot buddies, Brad and Allen. Judging by their lingo and party-on attitude, these two buckets of bolts should be hanging ten instead of waging war. You'll be treated to many views of their party antics as they transport Zod's troops from battle to battle. (A careful inspection of the battlefield during gameplay may also reveal them lounging in lawn chairs swigging a six-pack of rocket fuel.)

Z's 20 levels are scattered across five planets, each with a unique terrain—snow, jungle, desert, etc. To win each level, you must point-and-click your army of robots to capture the enemy fort while protecting your own. Sounds simple, doesn't it? It's not.

You don't have to mine ore to pay for construction and "build" various facilities a la C&C. I say good riddance—all that building and mining grew tiresome and stood in the way of the real fun, which is, of course, the fighting. Oh, there is some resource-management: You need to capture and hold various flags on the battlefield that represent control of factories.

• Expand as quickly as you can, but be sure to adequately defend the most strategic buildings (those that build tanks) while ignoring the less important ones (radar stations). There's nothing more frustrating than having the enemy win control of a building constructing a heavy tank right before it rolls out the door. • Don't employ a defensive strategy at the outset of a level—it's death. Push the attack, saving at each milestone, and then lay back and build up for the final attack on the enemy fort. • Remember, the more territories you hold, the faster your tanks and troops will be constructed. • Take the most direct route whenever possible—your troops can blast through most natural barriers, and time is of the essence. • Use snipers to get free enemy tanks.

A typical starting force.

Lose your fort and it's Game Over.

Some factories, when captured, let you beef up your robot army with light, medium, and heavy tanks, as well as jeeps and armored personnel carriers. Other factories let you build robots armed with lasers, flamethrowers, rocket launchers, basic machine guns, rifles, and sniper rifles. Some factories will be able to make most of these units; others, only a few. Some units will not be available to you until you reach a certain level in the game.

Still sounds easy? Well, it's not just a matter of capturing the factory. You have to decide what to produce at each facility while continuing to mount an offensive and repel enemy attacks. There's no time-out feature that lets you set up your battle-plan—it's sheer seat-of-the-pants mayhem. You'll be trying to decide whether to build a heavy tank or a medium one (a heavy tank takes longer) while your troops are screaming for help somewhere out on the battlefield.

But at least you won't have to worry about your troops dying inanely simply because your guiding hand wasn't there to tell them what to do. Computer-controlled troops in most other real-time games to date don't have the good sense to get out of the way of a superior enemy force bearing down on them, or to take cover, or grab a better weapon when they can. Z's troops do. They'll seize unclaimed territory and equipment such as grenades and abandoned vehicles without you telling them to—you just need to point them in the general direction. They'll also return fire when attacked and take basic evasive maneuvers on their own. (Being the whiners they are, though, they'll carry on the whole time as if you're murdering them by neglect.)

Heck, your troops even have the good sense to tell you when you're giving them a boneheaded order. Send your rifle-bearing grunts to attack a heavy tank and you'll be greeted with a hearty "No way!" They'll carry out the order regardless, but you'll know their chances of success. (Fail to protect your fort and your robots will voice their displeasure most colorfully.)

Because of the real-time nature of Z's battles, your troops' intelligence is vital—you simply don't have time to tell every robot and tank what to do. At the start of each level, when both sides are claiming territory, seemingly innocuous conflicts can literally mean victory or defeat. It would have been immensely frustrating to lose these battles simply because your troops lacked basic training. In Z, if you lose a battle, it's your fault.

Of course, this also means the enemy troops in the single-player game are no pushovers. They're just as smart as your own guys, and their unknown leader is pretty crafty—he (or she) will exploit your weaknesses, avoid your strengths, and rarely use the same strategy twice in a row. And yes, there's modem and network support for up to four players at once.

Z's not perfect. It's cut scenes are entertaining initially, but they grow repetitive in a hurry. The few victory and defeat movies are funny once, but that's it. And the levels themselves grow a little repetitive: Each shares the same basic construction and goal.

But overall, Z's unit variety, incredible level of graphical detail (I simply can't believe the number of things moving about the screen at once), humor, and excellent AI make it a top contender in the real-time strategy genre. If you liked C&C but found all that Tiberium mining dull, you'll *love* Z.

Z

Virgin Interactive Entertainment
www.vie.com
800-874-4607

Developer: The Bitmap Brothers
Platform: DOS CD (runs in Win 95)
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $54.99–$59.99

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	A-

Non-stop wargaming with excellent AI.

Build the wrong unit types early on, and you'll lose the battle.

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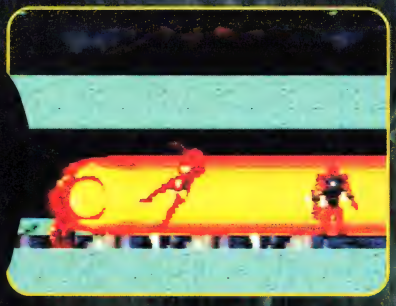

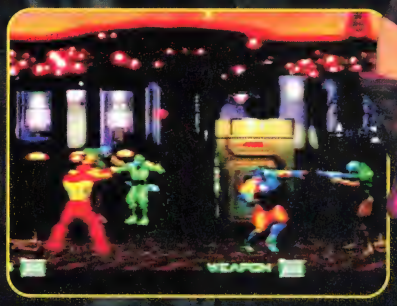

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DOS CD-ROM

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Final Doom

Doom wants me back. Dream on, Doom. I broke with this seminal 3D action game in an open "Dear Doom" letter a few months back when id brought out Master Levels for Doom II (*PC Entertainment*, May 1996, page 52). Suddenly, my old companion had stopped seeming classic and started seeming old. I was bored, and I wanted out.

But recently, Doom's been making noises like it's going to change. It calls itself Final Doom. It's pumped up to 64 levels in two 32-level episodes. It runs under Windows 95 as well as MS-DOS. Who's it trying to kid? It's still Doom. I mean, all you have to do is look at it.

And that's precisely the problem. The final iteration of the mother of 3D action games should be something out of the ordinary, and it isn't. It's exactly as ordinary as you'd expect Doom to be in these exciting days of Duke and Quake. While slightly more difficult than Doom II, and, in the Windows 95 version, more accessible than any Doom offspring, Final Doom is essentially a retread.

Final Doom is as gory as ever, but it's past its prime.

It didn't have to be this way. Look at Strife. It wasn't the best Doom spin-off—that's probably Hexen—but it was at least an attempt to do something different with the Doom II engine. Had Final Doom been conceived in something of the same entrepreneurial spirit, hell, I might just take it back—at least for a sleepless night or two.

But there's no distinctive new artwork, monsters, or features, and few striking level designs (though TNT: Evilution is very clever in places) to lure you into the game.

So sorry, Doom—I'm not coming back. And I hope you don't either. There has to be someone somewhere in the world who hasn't played around with you before. Go find them, make them happy...and leave me alone.

Or do I have to call the police?

—Peter Olafson

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Can you crack the case?

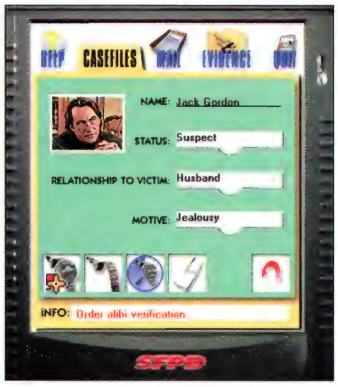
The Elk Moon Murder

By Christina Cheney

Collect all the evidence you can from the scene of the crime.

Someone has been murdered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and—surprise!—there's no shortage of dubious suspects and ulterior motives. You're the lead detective in The Elk Moon Murder, and you have only five days to crack the case. You'll have to sift through mountains of evidence to discover the truth about the victim and find out whodunnit.

The mystery begins on a Native American reservation in Santa Fe. Anna Elk Moon, a prominent artist, is found dead—shot in the head in her studio. More than $2,000 in cash and a sacred Native American relic are missing. This ancient piece of pottery, called the Kiva pot, is at the center of the mystery: Local folklore describes it as an ancient spiritual relic that was buried in a sacred Pueblo Indian dwelling called a kiva. Anna was restoring the pot before it was to be returned to its rightful owners, the Pueblo Indians. Now she's dead and the Kiva pot is gone. Let the sleuthing begin.



Use your PDA to keep track of suspects and evidence.

There's more to this case than an enigmatic pot, however. The story becomes more complicated as you realize that the possible motives for killing Anna Elk Moon range from revenge and jealousy to robbery and greed. You'll find a laundry list of Anna's enemies—her ex-husband is harboring deep resentment, she stole her current husband from her own close friend, and she's involved in controversial Pueblo politics. As if that wasn't enough, the Kiva pot is thought to exercise supernatural powers against anyone who abuses it...and Anna has been accused of deserting her true roots as a Native American.

As the lead detective, you're equipped with a Personal Digital Assistant that you can use to record the evidence, order alibi verifications, and receive forensics reports. Be sure to order alibi verifications for all suspicious characters, but keep in mind that verifying alibis takes time, and you've only got five days—about eight hours in real time—to solve the case.

You and your partner, detective Night Sky, will spend most of the game traveling around town gathering evidence. Most of your sleuthing consists of interviewing various suspects, witnesses, and informants. The interface is a map of the city with certain buildings labeled with the name of the person or organization located there. Just click on a blinking building to begin an interview. A video window will pop up with a list of potential questions for you to choose from.

As you interview people, pay close attention to whom they think is the murderer and make their choice the next person you question. You'll save time if you interview people in a logical order. In addition, you can use your PDA to prioritize alibi verifications, from the most likely suspect to the least likely suspect.

Some suspects are not accessible—that is, their buildings aren't blinking—until you have talked to someone who specifically mentions them. Also, you may have to re-interview almost all of the suspects to get the full story, because many of them tend to lie about their alibis.

The Elk Moon Murder is the first in a series of full-motion-video role-playing mysteries from Activision. If you like detective fiction and delight in tracking the details of an unfolding story, you'll enjoy The Elk Moon Murder. The video is high-quality and the acting is actually convincing—by gaming-world standards, at least. However, repeating interviews can be tedious, as their content is quite repetitive.

Elk Moon is not intended to keep an audience of hard-core gaming detectives enthralled for weeks on end. Rather, it is meant to be played through, in a relatively brief amount of time, by a more general audience looking for a good story with some mild brain teasers—a task it accomplishes quite nicely.

Elk Moon Murder
Activision
800-477-3650
www.activision.com

Platform: Win 95/DOS/Mac CD
Requires: 486DX2, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-

B+

A quality sleuthing experience for beginning gamers.

• Your first stop should be the scene of the crime, the Elk Moon Studio. Order forensic reports for all of the objects in the room. • Pay a visit to Carrie March early on. She'll gossip about some completely new suspects, making them available for questioning. • Prioritize your requests for alibi verifications. Check out the most dubious suspects first.

The hunt for Napoleon's treasure

Fort Boyard: The Challenge

By Christina Cheney

This ancient sage is full of riddles.

You'll need a brief history lesson before you play Fort Boyard: The Challenge, a top-selling adventure game in France that has just now breached U.S. shores. Remember Napoleon, the petite French emperor who was exiled way back in 1841? Well, legend has it that on his way to being deported, his last stop was the island citadel Fort Boyard, where he hid a vast treasure.

Your goal, of course, is to locate this treasure. To do so, you'll need to succeed in more than 20 different events and collect seven magical keys that will open the iron gates guarding the loot. But winning these events is only the first step in this game, for there are two more tests before you reach the treasure.

The magical keys are strategically placed in, around, and on the fort. Getting to them requires you to complete a unique challenge for each one. Before each event, you can choose a type of player: strong, clever, etc. You'll have to climb vertical walls, swing from bungee cords, dive into cavernous voids, hang suspended from the ceiling in stirrups, navigate through deep, dark hallways—the list goes on and on. There's no shortage of extreme events, and each one requires a combination of agility, concentration, precision, and other skills. Because each task is so different, there's no single strategy. You have to stay on your toes—sometimes quite literally.

It takes precision and agility to succeed at the Hanging Stirrups.

You'll have to climb the outside wall of the fort to get one of the keys.

Meanwhile, to make things even tougher, you're racing against the clock. Take too long to finish an event, and your player could be thrown in jail. If that happens, as it did to me because I failed the challenge of the Hanging Stirrups, you'll immediately get another player. However, each time one of your players goes to jail, it becomes more difficult to succeed at the final level.

Once you've acquired the seven magical keys, you gain access to the next section of the game, called Game Masters. This part is easier than the events and consists of clever puzzle-type sequences. Each time you solve a puzzle, you gain extra time. Those extra minutes will come in handy once you finally get through the iron gates guarding the treasure.

When you get past the Game Masters, you'll have to play another series of events that gives you clues to the word that unlocks the treasure. You'll need to spell this word on the floor by selecting players with corresponding letters. This is where it helps to have kept your players out of jail. Once you've spelled the word, just click on the head of the lion guarding the treasure and you've won. Now it's only a question of how to carry off all the money!

Fort Boyard is filled with hours of gameplay and manages to keep you hooked with its many different types of events. Some events are more challenging than others, but they're all fun, even the Ball Labyrinth (where you maneuver a wooden ball through a tabletop maze). The animation uses stop-motion technology and is relatively smooth and fluid. The occasional video sequences are useful for clues and they fit in well with the flow of the game. Overall, Fort Boyard offers challenging gameplay with a lot of variety.

Fort Boyard: The Challenge

Microids
415-928-2056

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $24.95

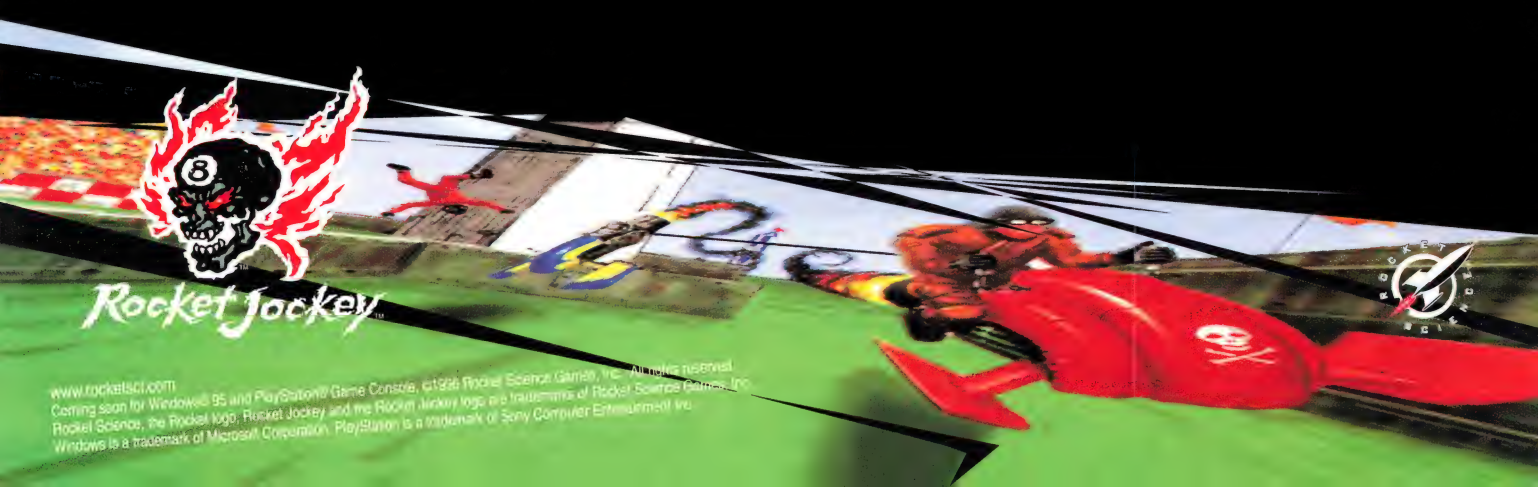
GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B

An atypical adventure laden with plenty of variety.

TIPS

- Listen to the disembodied voice before each event. It will give you clues for selecting the best type of player.
- If you go to prison, only a rat can help you escape.
- If time is running out and you're not anywhere near winning an event, just press the Space Bar to escape and try your luck at another event. This works for all but two of the events.

RULES !



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Back in the race

Grand Prix II

By Peter Olafson

Zoom through the streets of Monaco.

MicroProse's World Circuit is one of my all-time favorite games. That 1991 Amiga racer was the first serious Formula One sim, and the IBM conversion, gloriously texture-mapped, put you in the driver's seat as no game had done before. I didn't mind losing because just being there was a privilege, and it captured my heart before I even knew I had given it away.

The high-end sequel to Formula One was fully three years in the making, and its arrival finds the driving-game world much changed. Expectations for Grand Prix II (no, I don't quite understand the name change either) can only have been elevated by the long wait and appearance of a strong rival in IndyCar II.

The other racers usually show you the best path through a track—if they don't lose it in a tight corner first.

In short, GP II had better be pretty damn good. And it is. It's not World Circuit—nothing could be—but it will please both veterans who want to lay tweaking hands on every part of the car and novices who just want to step on it.

The concept is familiar: You're following an international circuit of 16 tracks laid out in sumptuous detail—from the affluent urban sprawl of Monaco to the thick dogleg of Italy's Monza to the elongated figure-eight of Japan's Suzuka—with the goal of winning the Drivers' Championship.

Of course, the real fun is out on the track. You hop into a simplified cockpit with a digital display, wait for the orange light to go green, and, using joystick and keyboard (or a steering wheel setup), conspire to chart an optimal path through the course as speedily and accurately as possible.

From the moment you start, it's a joy: listening to the high-speed-drill sound of the engine; watching the rich thicket of textured roadside scenery; jockeying for position on the curves; keeping an eye on the horizon for cars ahead of you; and checking the twin rear-view mirrors for threats to your position. In the easiest modes, the optimal path is marked with a white guideline, the car gears down automatically for the curves, and a clueless novice can steer and stamp on the gas and actually place. In the difficult modes—where you suddenly realize you have full control of a 200-mph, four-wheel guided missile—you'll sweat every maneuver.

But the real battle is fought off-track. You can adjust the car's rear and front wings, gear ratios, brake balance, springs, ride height, packers, dampers, anti-roll bars, and tire wear.

How do you know what you're doing? Well, you

continued on page 88

Grand Prix II
MicroProse
800-695-4263
www.microprose.com

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX4/100, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Street Price: $50–$55

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	C+
OVERALL	B+

It's not as revolutionary as its predecessor, but GP II's a beautiful, exciting sim that will appeal to gear heads and novices alike.

• Start out in the "Quickrace" mode. By default, it makes visible the imaginary line you'll need to follow to clock the fastest lap, and it's a good tool for learning tracks' ins and outs. • Don't forget to gas up; there's no make-the-wife-get-out-and-push option. • Don't toy with your car's settings idly; always use Performance Analysis first to determine the source of your problem.

Psychologists say inside every 18 to 35-year-old male, there lies a potential psychotic killer.

continued from page 86

probably won't at first. (I didn't know what some of those things were before I checked the manual.) That's where Performance Analysis comes in. It uses information recorded from the car's onboard computer to help you make your tuning decisions. Of course, this doesn't prevent any of the eight potential mechanical failures.

Assuming the car finishes in one piece, you'll find the computer opponents (you can also play with a friend via modem or null-modem cable) a very credible bunch. Even at the lowest difficulty setting, they'll stay on your tail like a pack of junkyard dogs and wait for you to make that one wide turn, to brake instead of accelerate. Then they'll blast by you without apology. The last lap of each of my races invariably saw me falling behind one or two competitors. Someone's thinking ahead out there, and I wish it had been me.

The cockpit view lets you check vital race stats—if you can take your eyes off the road.

The bad news: The hardware to support all this good stuff is fairly daunting. GP II requires a 486DX4/100 or a Pentium—and I'd recommend a Pentium with as much oomph as possible. On a Pentium 133 with 32MB of RAM, I had to knock the resolution down to VGA and kill some graphic features to bring the estimated frame rate above the clocking limit of 25.6 frames per second (fps). In Super VGA, with all features enabled, I clocked a stodgy 9.1 fps. On tracks with a lot of scenery, like Monaco, you can watch the frames tick by one by one.

There's nothing conspicuous missing on the features side—GP II is just thorough enough to entertain without making you feel swamped. But it's strange that MicroProse hasn't integrated the game with parent company Spectrum HoloByte's recent Grand Prix Manager: they share the font on the box cover, but that's about it. GPM could have used a little of GP II's very real excitement, and I'd love to be able to design a car from scratch under GPM—not just fine-tune one—and then take it out for a spin in GP II.

It's also odd that the game uses 1994 F1 teams. (Would you buy a 1996 baseball game with 1994 stats? I didn't think so.) The 150-page manual is very thorough and informative, but it needs an index. The final knock is the god-awful hard-rock theme music. This is an illustration of how bad music can help kill a player's enthusiasm for a good game: Before I figured out how to turn it off, I shut off the computer a couple of times simply so I wouldn't have to listen to it.

But look—I'm talking about indexes and crappy rock music. This game's about driving fast and fiddling with your car afterward. And, fact is, Grand Prix II is a good game, if not the positively heroic one the original was back in the early '90s. It's just that World Circuit has been on hiatus, and while it's been gone I've been spoiled by Papyrus' IndyCar Racing and the recent IndyCar II. There's someone else on the starting grid this time, but Grand Prix II is definitely in the race.

You can tweak almost every part of your car to make it a race-dominating beast.

Here comes the yellow flag.

CAN HE

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(Quintessential Art of Destruction)

Blow away your enemies as you maneuver your craft over constantly changing terrain in an attempt to save up to 200 hostages. An explosive soundtrack and revolutionary technology make each of QAD's more than 20 deadly missions a blast.

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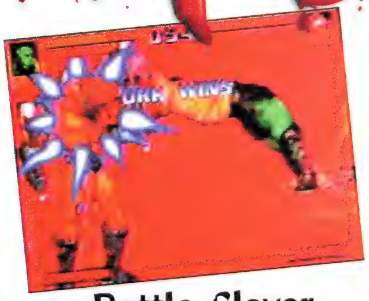
Nihilist

TO PLAY?



Battle Slayer

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RATING PENDING RP

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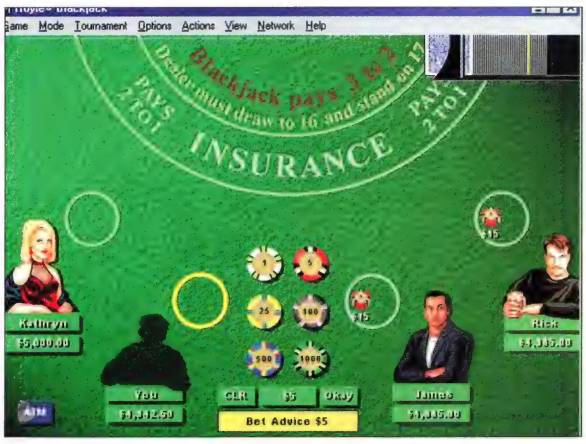
18 to 3[illegible]

a potential psychotic killer.

Hoyle Blackjack



Solid game—just don't look for bells and whistles.

It happens as surely as taxes in spring, or road improvements around municipal election time: You buy that spiffy computer with all the latest multimedia whistles, and several companies rush forward with new versions of Vegas-style gambling games.

In such circumstances, it's hard to get excited about Sierra's Hoyle Blackjack. The game lets you choose from several basic sets of blackjack rules, including Vegas Strip, Downtown Vegas, Atlantic City, and Reno. Other options include creating your own customized set of rules (governing the number of decks, insurance, etc.), looking at your player stats, and setting betting limits.

You can play alone or randomly select three additional players from several included photographs, animated human images, or cute drawings of computers. However, you can't choose two opponents instead of three, or scan your own photographs for use in the game. And you can't select your own visual background or card design. There's no music, and no intermission features. A little imagination and humor could have gone a long way.

Hoyle Blackjack
Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
www.sierra.com

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $14.95

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	C-
OVERALL	C

Hoyle Blackjack's high point is an Internet option that lets you dial into the Sierra Internet Gaming System and play other people live (assuming you have Windows 95). The low point is this game's Tutorial Mode, which isn't a teaching tutorial at all, but very brief directions on what to do at any given moment. The help file provides good blackjack instructions and strategies, but it isn't a tutorial, and there's no printed documentation with the game.

One other caveat: Although the animated player images are advertised as "interactive characters," they aren't. Each animated player speaks a few individualized comments depending upon the quality of a dealt hand.

In sum, Hoyle Blackjack is a decent value-priced blackjack simulation devoid of excitement. It's certainly less expensive than a trip to Vegas, but that's about it. *—Barry Brenesal*

Hoyle Solitaire

Unbelievably, Solitaire compilations seem to pop up every six months or so. Don't gamemakers realize this game ships free with Windows? Maybe they also know that a select group of helpless addicts treasure these new iterations of their favorite time-killer.

The latest variant is Hoyle Solitaire, and while it's not flashy, it's a solid addition to the ranks. Hoyle Solitaire includes 28 solitaire games that will raise the adrenaline level in any regular player's bloodstream: La Belle Lucie, Klondike, Nestor, and Poker Square, to name a few. The program tracks your record over time and offers Replay, Redeal, and Restore options.

But still, you might expect a little more than 28 solitaire variants out of Hoyle Solitaire. QQP's out-of-print, 16-color Solitaire's Journey remains my wife's favorite: 105 games, a "quest" mode, and a "cross-country, city-by-city touring competition." This old title offered negligible graphics, but it supplied more for the serious solitaire enthusiast than Hoyle Solitaire.

Hoyle Solitaire should satisfy enthusiasts.

Hoyle Solitaire
Sierra Online
800-757-7707
www.sierra.com

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $14.95

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	C
OVERALL	B-

The game's basic instructions are also disappointing. They're not bad, but Sierra shouldn't refer to them as a "tutorial," which implies an interactive mode, something that's not here.

Sierra does show one touch of imagination. It's called Card Flick. Basically, you've got a hat sitting on the ground in the distance, and cards in your hand. You flick the cards one by one trying to get them into the hat. Yep, that's it.

Mind you, it's all very handsomely done. Sierra makes excellent use of Windows' 256-color palette to offer a selection of 10 playing room backgrounds and 14 deck patterns.

It's these classy graphics, the low price, and a nice selection of game variants that make Hoyle Solitaire a decent buy. The game's fun, if not all-inclusive, and a good stopgap until something more elaborate comes along for Windows 95. *—Barry Brenesal*

One False Move and His Tomb Becomes Yours

Chaos grips an Egyptian mining site. After unearthing an ancient hieroglyphic chest, the workers are paralyzed by fear. They've tread upon hallowed grounds. Or so they believe. You are sent to learn the truth.

Beneath the site, you discover the 3,000 year-old tombs of Pharaoh Natanuka, the ancient spirits dwelling within, and murderous intruders. Now you must guard the tombs, their secret treasures and your life.

Navigate through deadly passageways, battle menacing mummies and outwit evil tomb robbers to ultimately unlock the mysteries of the Egyptian afterlife.

If you think getting out is easy, you're dead wrong.

- Explore over 50 different mystical locations
- Solve over 50 hair-raising puzzles
- Challenge Malcolm McDowell in over 50 minutes of cinematic sequences

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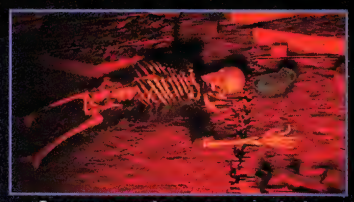
STARRING Malcolm McDowell

At this Egyptian mining site, you could get the shaft

Trespassing is a capital offense



One wrong move becomes a grave mistake

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An RPG throwback

Albion

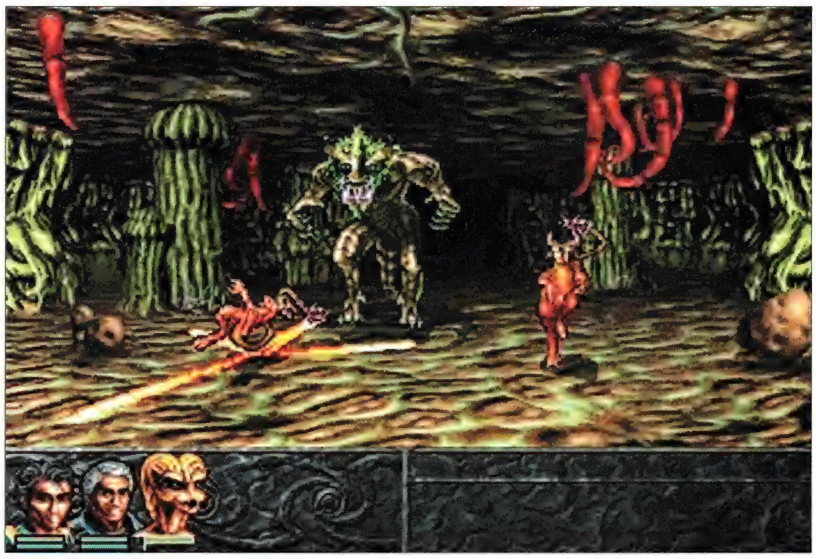
By Peter Olafson

Albion's top-down view is reminiscent of console RPGs.

A desert. It was supposed to be a desert. That's what the company wanted: a barren world rich in raw materials for the taking. That's what the probe found, that's why the mining ship was dispatched, and that's what shows up on your sensors as your exploratory shuttle approaches.

It's not until your shuttle's systems mysteriously fail and you crash that you discover the desert was an illusion: This place is a garden positively brimming with life—some of it unexpectedly familiar.

Your own life isn't making much of a contribution to the general buzz. A smoldering ship and an oxygen-rich atmosphere don't mix, and the resultant explosion puts you out of commission. Blue Byte's Albion doesn't begin until you've spent a couple of months convalescing under the care of the planet's native race of catlike humanoids. They're friendly—provided you observe the dictates of basic humanoid courtesy—and will give you the keys to the city in exchange for some simple considerations.



You can learn as much as you want about your humanoid host–when you're not battling fearsome beasts.

Beyond that—well, I don't want to give too much away. Suffice it to say that nothing is quite as simple as it seems in this huge mixed bag of a role-playing game.

The story itself is a big plus. It's not just dumped into the manual or plopped down on the game in a few big pieces. You'll be exposed to as much of the rich culture and history of your hosts as you care to learn, typically in dribs and drabs of conversation (conducted by either clicking on topics or typing in one of your own).

Unfortunately, the game doesn't have quite the technological bite to bring it off without some missteps. Albion does have variety, and, as noted in our preview (August 1996, page 54), that gives it a certain resilience. You'll spend much of your time sending your party through the interior of buildings, seen from a third-person, isometric perspective. When you're in the cities and any place dungeonlike—the service deck of the mining ship *Toronto*, for instance—the game switches into a Wolfenstein-like 3D mode. In the turn-based combat sections of the game, you'll work within an overhead grid using a point-and-click system.

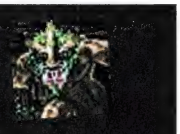
When traveling cross-country, the view zooms out to high altitude, a little in the fashion of *Jurassic Park*. This is where the game's graphics and animations sparkle most, and, with the humid hum of night about the party, it's where I felt most at home.

In fact, in some respects, the game owes as much to console RPGs as computer ones. In the angled-down screens, the party moves single-file in the style of Sega's classic Phantasy Star. Some speeches early in the game have the choppiness that typically comes with translation. (Albion was originally released in Germany.)

Once you kickstart the game, it quickly moves beyond those limitations; it's greater than the sum of its parts. Nevertheless, these things hint at a basic problem with the game: it's engine is old, and sometimes it shows. Back in 1993, when the original incarnation of this system was used to drive Thalion's Ambermoon (never released in the U.S.), it produced a fascinating hodge-podge. Three years later, it seems relatively flat and bland, and it provides no sense of suspense. The game's a bit dull.

Despite a strong plot and a variety of play styles, Albion feels as though it's all on the same level—much as a true desert world would be. If there's a sequel—and I hope there is—the makers will need to rev up the engine.

Albion
Blue Byte
800-933-2983
www.bluebyte.com



Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, mouse
List Price: $59.99

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B-

If you can look past the slightly dated engine, Albion's strong story makes for a fun role-playing game.

• After learning the door code from your friend, you can get into the *Toronto's* communications center via the service deck. Inside, you'll find a weapon that'll give you a head start once you're planetside. The only problem is, you can't get out the way you got in, and the security folks guarding the door will confiscate your weapon if you exit that way with it in inventory. Retreat to the service deck and stow the ordnance in the storage compartment, then exit by the door and re-enter the service deck to claim your prize.

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Bogeying never felt so good

Links LS

By Daniel Morris

Study each hole from every angle before taking the shot.

Golf may be the sport of kings, but it's a quiet sport. And generally, the computer golfing experience has been just as quiet. As good as EA's PGA Tour series has been, there haven't been many golf games you could call a truly immersive "sim" experience.

That all changes when you open up Access Software's Links LS, the long-awaited evolution of the classic Links 386.

Links LS (that's Legends in Sports, if you're curious) shoots to the top of the leader board in PC golf games. It's safe to call it a golf sim—a truly absorbing round of golf played in the den. I found the experience so realistic that my real-life golf game seemed to be translated onto the computer. Drive a par-five green in two, then five-putt. Arrgh! But golf requires two things for its fullest enjoyment—an appreciation of beauty and loads of patience. The beauty comes in the package; the patience is something you'll have to supply.

The manual makes no attempt to soft-soap you; it takes effort and time to master the game, and in this respect, Links LS is a simulation as much as entertainment. I'm the leading money winner in my copy of PGA Tour '96 with little effort. I've played a dozen rounds of golf in Links LS and have yet to shoot par for a course.

But I've had a blast trying. The graphics are amazing, almost photorealistic, and very involving. The meticulous terrain construction, convincing foliage and sky—everything is correct, right down to the neighboring cabins and concrete cart trails. You kick up divots, send broken tees flying, and scrape the grass with your wedges. Everything about the visual experience is top-notch, and on a fast system, the redraw rate isn't bad at all.

Links LS uses the classic arcing swing meter, which, in my opinion, ranks up there with the light bulb and steam engine as a stroke of sheer genius. Just like the real game, however, the poetic simplicity of play hides the incredible skill and control needed to consistently hit well. Placement is controlled by aiming a marker just before your shot. You do this taking into account wind factors and whether or not you intend to draw or fade. The game's amazing ball-flight and ground-roll models take care of the rest.

The golfers are a treat. Arnold Palmer and three anonymous weekend warriors are video-captured, and their swings are unique and flawlessly rendered. Arnie tees up with his deep knee-bend, the young woman makes a sweet, compact swing, the middle-aged guy has a nice, classic motion. Each also has unique animations and vocals for good and bad shots. It's up to you to determine if they pump their fists and give a hearty "Crushed that one!" or "That's on," or toss their club in frustration with a groaning "I quit."

Past golf games have had wonderful elements but just weren't great *games*. Anyone who's seen The Skins Game at Bighorn saw a truly photorealistic course, although the game was superimposed

Links LS
Access Software
800-800-4880
www.accesssoftware.com

Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 12MB RAM (16MB in Win 95), 1MB video card with at least 800-by-600 resolution in 32K colors, sound card, mouse
List Price: $79.95

GAMEPLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	A-

As convincing and playable a golf game as you'll find anywhere—if you've got the horsepower to enjoy it.

Sorry, duffers—no tournament play here.

Here's the MEGARACE SUPER SEQUEL- you ready to be roadkill?

THE RULES ARE SIMPLE.

DRIVE REAL FAST,

BLOW-UP STUFF

WHILE SOME PINHEAD INSULTS YOU!

As a contestant in the futuristic hit TV show MegaRace 2, you'll roar through an amazingly vivid virtual world, blasting other racers in your well-armed war wagon. Your objective is simple ... splatter or be splattered. Either way you'll boost show ratings and keep host Lance Boyle off your back ... at least for a while. MegaRace 2 is the frantic race and re-load game for people who don't brake for anything.

Be sure to enter "Get That Boyle Off Your Back". You might win a big screen TV. For details, visit our web site at www.mindscape.com

Also look for us at www.gamespot.com

megarace 2™

FOR DOS CD-ROM

CRYO

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RATING PENDING RP

MINDSCAPE®

over the photo and seemed as interactive as an instructional video. Other games have had solid playability but an unsatisfying environment. Links LS finally offers the best of all worlds.

The three courses included are stunning, particularly the Hawaiian Plantation and Village greens at Kapalua. Arnold Palmer's home course at Latrobe Country Club is not only pretty, but as tough a round as you'll ever play.

Best still, all of the Links 386 Super VGA courses you may own are fully compatible and playable. They've been pre-converted for Links LS, so all you need to do is load your Links 386 courses and run a simple conversion within the game. Then you're on the first tee.

Access also plans to release new courses for Links LS in packages featuring PGA pros at their home courses, along the lines of Arnold Palmer at Latrobe. You'll get not just the course but the player as well, fully animated and ready to hit some balls with you. Real golf junkies will love the ability to tour the pro's office and workshop. Access even plans to do celebrity player add-ons.

There are a couple of things about Links LS that I wish could be mulliganed. For one, there are no tournaments to play in. You get a wonderful round of golf, but the only pro competition is Arnie, and he's only playing for fun. You can play a skins game for money, but so what? There's a pleasure in the PGA Tour that nothing else can match. Links LS doesn't even let you play tourneys against a list of made-up names.

But the real cloud dogging Links LS, the one that keeps you nervous about being struck by lightning, is the absolute bear of a load it puts on your system. You'll need a Pentium—ignore the 486 "minimum requirement"—to enjoy the game, and the faster the better, and the more RAM the better, and the more megs on your video card the better, and...the list goes on and on. How long does it last? There are no fewer than 26 pages of a small-print manual devoted to performance, optimization, upgrading info, troubleshooting FAQs, modification, drivers—you name it. Links LS is a beast, and Access recommends that you have at least 32MB of RAM. A Pentium 90 with 12MB RAM could barely run the thing and crashed repeatedly, croaking each time for more memory. Holy divots, Batman!

So, to put it in a philosophical way that we duffers find reassuring, let's put forth a little analogy: the game requires care and attention, much like a course needs meticulous watering and grooming. Sound painless and zen-like? Good. Because the Links LS manual actually contains an entry in its technical section called "Buying a New Computer," which pretty much says all you need to know about recommended requirements.

Whew. With all that out of the way, let's get back to what makes it all worthwhile: It's the best golf game on the market, and a sporting delight. If you're a golfer—and if you're this deep in the review, my guess is you are—Links LS is your game. It has the gorgeous environment, classic control, lifelike ball flight and roll, and the you-are-there experience. You just supply the lifetime to master it.

TIPS

• Play as an Amateur until you get the hang of the swing, then jump up to Pro as soon as you feel ready. Amateur is easier, but far less rewarding in terms of shot selection and driving distance. • Take your caddy's recommendations with a grain of salt, and do your own math. The caddy tends to underestimate how far you can hit, and will often suggest clubs that would send you off onto the next hole. • There's no driving range or practice green, but you can practice all you like by selecting Auto Mulligan and taking shot after shot from the same spot. This is a great way to master shots. • Resist the urge to overhit, thinking you can coax more distance from your drive. Any error on your downswing will be geometrically exaggerated and will put you in big trouble.

A chip and a putt gets you down in two.

Can you help Arnie save par?

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NECRODOME™ is real-time, 3D, futuristic motorized mayhem. Drive a powerful, armored vehicle bristling with mega-weapons. Win or die in 30 extremely daunting arenas.

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PlayStation

MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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The old college try

NCAA Championship Basketball

By Willem Knibbe

The assortment of colorful dunks in NCAA Championship Basketball includes some in-your-face monster jams.

So Bobby Knight's got nothing on you, huh? You think that, given the chance, you'd outcoach him *and* Rick Pitino while you waltzed your way to the college basketball championship?

OK, then prove it in NCAA Championship Basketball, which combines arcade-style 5-on-5 hoops play with a sophisticated sim of the Division I coaching life.

You can lace 'em up and get right on the court or jump straight into March Madness, but the fun and innovation of the game is the chance to build your program through recruiting, just like Knight and Pitino do.

Start a season, pick one of 64 real college teams, look over your roster to evaluate your talent, and then hit the road—it's time to find and sign the next All-American to propel your team to greatness.

It's no easy task. There are 300 recruits to check out; they're rated from 1 to 16 in all the basic basketball skills, and each has his own agenda.

That's right—you can't just click on a guy and assume he'll come to your program. You have to review his profile and see which of seven factors is most important to him. These factors, which range from "playing close to home" to "playing on a team with Final Four potential," all combined with whether you recruit him lightly, normally, or heavily, determine whether the diaper dandy signs that letter of intent with your school.

And it's not a one-shot deal—you're truly building a program. Your players improve every year, so this season's weak freshman could be next year's sophomore sensation—if he has the innate ability and you give the guy some playing time.

It's this aspect of the game that's most intriguing. You'll get a kick out of watching your recruits mature, figuring out which holes to fill between seasons, tracking your national ranking and players' stats during the year, and balancing play-time issues with the desire to win right now.

That can be difficult. The computer AI can be very tough—even at the easiest setting, my opponent never shot less than 70 percent from the field. OK, maybe my defense isn't the best, but college kids often miss the wide-open jumpers. Not in this game.

The gameplay is pretty addictive. Once I got used to the controls (make sure you use a gamepad) and figured out some of the offensive and defensive sets, I was slammin' and jammin' and talking trash and launching threes and chewing out the refs—and wishing I had another copy of the game so I could get my pal into a modem-to-modem hoopfest.

But NCAA Championship, GTE's first sports game, is not without its flaws. Its rotating camera can't be changed, and often my shooting guard would be wide open on the right or left wing, but he wouldn't be onscreen.

Also, it's almost impossible to truly direct your passes; they go to the highlighted player with CPU Pass Assist turned on or the player calling for the ball if the Assist is turned off. And there are no preset plays that you can call on the fly. You can set general offensive and defensive strategies—such as a motion, inside, outside, or ball-control offense—but you have to call a timeout and go three menus deep to change up.

Visually, the 64 stadiums are beautiful. The players themselves are a bit jagged around the edges, but the 4,500 frames of animation make their 100 moves fluid (on a Pentium). There are also a lot of nice, subtle touches—the coach pacing the sidelines, players wiping sweat from their brows as they wait for a free throw, the "swat" motion when a player goes for a block.

NCAA Championship is by no means a slam-dunk success, but it is a unique and well-implemented sim. Tough gameplay and modem-to-modem capability make it a very promising freshman.

TIPS

- **Don't go for a steal when your player has his back to the dribbler. You'll get whistled for a reaching foul.**
- **Pick your recruits carefully. If you go for that blue-chipper who has no interest in your school, he'll likely sign with someone else and you'll have missed a recruiting turn.**
- **When you get a double screen on the baseline, either take the jumper or curl into the lane (your defender often gets tangled up and you can get an easy slam).**

NCAA Championship Basketball

GTE Entertainment
800-483-8632
www.im.gte.com

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $59.95

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B-

If you dream of being a college coach, this is the hoops game for you.

One intergalactic space surfer,
one totally thrash invasion fleet,
one killer babe . . .
. . . Cool!
GALAXY Burgers
SPACE DUDE
PUBLISHED BY
FG
FORMGEN
CATCH THE WAVE APRIL 1ST

Windows slugger

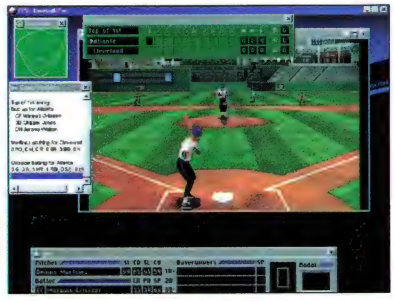
Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96

By Peter Olafson

While the switch between the pitcher and full 3D view can be disconcerting, the players and parks look great.

Going, going, going...and not quite gone. With its confident synergy of physics-based action, a storehouse of stats, and league play as it's never been practiced, Sierra's Baseball Pro '96 gives the dedicated computer-baseball player a good long ride.

But, at the same time, there's something about this baseball sim, newly moved to Windows, that's slightly off the wall. That's not to say Baseball Pro strikes out; it's more like a team that could have won by 10 runs, winning by only 5 instead. Indeed, there's not enough space to list all the things this updated version of the ambitious, if flawed, 1994 game does well, so I'm going to mention the qualities that especially impressed me.



Sometimes the ability to have multiple windows isn't a blessing.

For one, Baseball Pro rejects the system of fixed outcomes that runs through most baseball games. That is, it doesn't treat the hit ball as a pre-determined result, but as untapped potential, and exercises upon its path a range of variables—ball spin, humidity, wind, gravity, and more. This gives the game the infinite variety—the chemistry—that baseball is all about.

You're also granted intimate control over the cameras, so you see the game from any angle. The motion-captured players look great, provided you don't move in too closely so they start to look like dolls. The teams still can't be managed in as much detail as I'd like, but the computer managers are lively and interesting entities who, rather than just act on your trade offers, will propose their own. All the ballparks are included. (The original FPS: Baseball gave you the lion's share, but made you buy a data disc to collect the remainder.) And the detail with which injuries are approached is nothing less than amazing. The injury status of the silicon players is updated regularly: Reggie Jefferson (broken tooth) is day-to-day, for example.

The music and the crowd sounds also aim to please. In fact, the game fairly bursts out of the speakers. You don't have to take me out to ballpark; I'm already there.

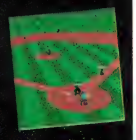
And yet, much as I wanted to carry Baseball Pro off on my shoulders, it kept slipping off. I wish the game was consistently full-screen: I found its practice of expanding from the 2D pitcher-batter window to full-screen 3D a bit jarring. The array of small windows—scoreboard, info box, top-down view, and text description—make the screen seem cluttered. When the game is minimized and then restored, it comes back without sound. The menu system remains less than intuitive, and computer-controlled baserunners seem to have trouble figuring out what to do.

The documentation is another issue: Once again, it's all on the CD. Sure, you can print it out, but this isn't shareware—it's the big leagues. What I wouldn't have given for a nice, bound manual.

Finally, Windows sends a rather chilly wind through Baseball Pro's stadiums. On a visceral level, there's something slightly distant about the game—as though there was an invisible barrier between you and the field. That's a feeling I never had with the original.

Still, Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro is a solid hit, and, given the vanishing act performed by Microsoft's long-awaited baseball game, it will have the Windows market to itself for some time to come. I do think the ultimate baseball game is still ahead of us. But I won't be surprised if it hails from this direction.

Front Page Sports: Baseball Pro '96



Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
www.sierra.com

Developer: Dynamix
Platform: Win 95/Win 3.1 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM/Win 95, 12MB RAM/Win 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	B+

Beautiful ballparks, motion-captured players, and authentic stadium sounds establish Pro '96 as the Windows baseball sim to beat.

- **If you find holes in your roster, get your offers for free agents in early. Otherwise, the best players will be picked up by your opponents.**
- **Policing your injured players is something of an art and something of a gamble. By and large, day-to-day players can play through the pain, but sometimes they just won't get better and you'll need to put them on the Disabled List.**

You're coach, player and general manager of an NFL team.
Better kick ass if you want to protect your assets.

KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+ Blue Sky NFL

For Windows 95 and DOS CD-ROM.
http://www.philipsgames.com

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A different kind of virtual office

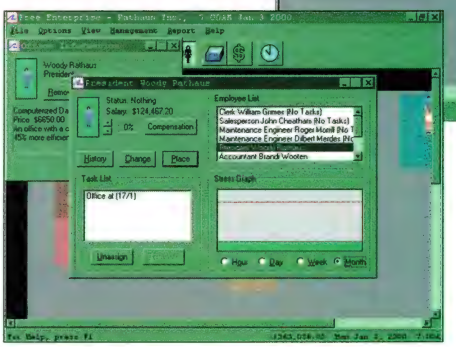
Free Enterprise

By Shane Mooney

Not only do you select what factory you want, but you choose from more than 100 products to build.

For some people, there's no better way to unwind after a hard day at the office than by spending the evening playing a computer game that's just like work. You say you aren't like that? You prefer relieving stress by blowing things up rather than composing profit-and-loss statements? Well, then you probably won't enjoy Tsunami's Free Enterprise, an entrepreneur sim that's more like work than any job I've ever had.

If you want to find out what the term "micro-management" means, just check out this sim. You must concern yourself with every facet of starting a new business, from picking the city in which it will be located to hiring and firing personnel (based on their résumés). You get to choose from more than 50 cities, from Pittsburgh to San Francisco. Look closely at both the price of factory space and the area's median income level (New York's is high, while Columbus' is lower).



I want to be a boss: You control who you hire and fire, as well as how much you pay them.

The items you choose to manufacture aren't just limited to those ubiquitous but equally vague Widgets. There are more than 100 different products to make, including cordless screwdrivers, VCRs, and plastic containers. You must carefully weigh the cost of supply versus profit potential before deciding what you'll make.

After picking a vacant building, you get to browse through a catalog to get the machines and office supplies you need. To be successful, you'll need to have a factory floor plan that operates at peak performance. You'll have to calculate the best position for things like storage areas, bathrooms, and other factory equipment in order to maximize profits. Told you this was detailed.

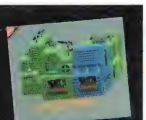
The most unique feature of the game is your personnel, who come with their own individual personalities and quirks. Using what Tsunami calls Interactive Intelligence, your little workers can be either mindless drones (my favorite type in the real world) or people who can "think" for themselves. That's a mixed benefit: Along with personalities that can allow workers to perform in a variety of different situations, you also have idiosyncrasies that can prove detrimental. Sure, the coffee drinker may have such a caffeine buzz that he goes like gangbusters, but he'll also be answering the call of nature quite often. So, you must determine if his productivity will fit your needs. If you have people with alcohol problems, you could find yourself with a lot of absenteeism, and maybe even a few on-the-job accidents.

For those not content with merely running a successful business, there are a few built-in scenarios. While not exactly as exciting as SimCity's "aliens running amok in the city," Free Enterprise's obstacles are all the excitement a real-world manager needs. If the challenge of downsizing and re-optimizing your floor plan sounds like fun, these scenarios are sure to please.

Armchair entrepreneurs will no doubt enjoy this stuff. If you liked SimCity except for the lack of complete, totalitarian control, then you'll probably love Free Enterprise. It's a fine model for business majors looking to get their fingers paper-cut in the world of capitalism.

Although it was neat to see my little hirelings slaving away in my factory, I personally found that the plain interface in our pre-release version, and the general nature of the title, made for pretty dry gaming. As a way to spend idle time or a way to blow off some steam, I'd have to say Free Enterprise is about as appealing as a real job. Like life, there aren't a whole lot of bells and whistles to keep one wanting to go back to work. You just do it.

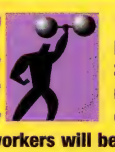
Free Enterprise
Tsunami Media
800-327-1367
www.tsunamimedia.com



Platform: Win 95
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	C+
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	C-
OVERALL	B-

Hardcore capitalists and management types will enjoy this challenging sim.



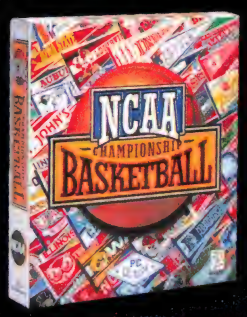
TIPS

- **Be sure to place safety zones around machine inputs; otherwise, your workers will be sucked into the machines, which doesn't help productivity one bit.**
- **For a more automated factory floor, attach bins to feed raw material into a machine and collect finished product from a machine.**
- **Be sure to analyze your competitors to find out what's already being done and where the market is; a spy is a lot of help in this regard.**
- **Try to keep your work force as small as possible to lower your costs.**

Advanced artificial intelligence lets you grow players from freshman to senior year.

Network and modem options let you challenge your friends for season or tournament play.

Extensive recruiting feature let's you rebuild your team after each season of play.



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http://www.im.gte.com

GTE Entertainment

64 Division I Teams

Network and Modem-to-Modem Play

Extensive Recruiting

3D SGI Graphics

March Madness℠

National Champion

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KIDS TO ADULTS AGES 6+

PC CD-ROM

NCAA

Close Combat

By Andrew Miller

There's an impressive amount of detail in here, but it can slow down the action.

You can learn the status of each of your dogfaces with the click of a button.

It's bad enough that Microsoft wants to take over the business world, but is nothing sacred to the software monolith? Evidently not.

Gates and Microsoft have set their sights on the gaming realm. To prove how serious they are, one of their first titles is Close Combat, a revolutionary World War II military simulation based on the first month of the Allied invasion of Normandy.

PC GAMES A LIST

I'd love to tell you that Close Combat was the worst wargame I've ever played, but I'd be lying. The truth is, it's one of the best. After you've played Close Combat, you'll probably never look at another turn-based military sim the same way. It just won't measure up.

For starters, unlike Battlefield: Ardennes and most other World War II sims, Close Combat's not turn-based. Instead, it blends continuous real-time action with historically accurate weapons, terrain, and scenarios.

The game gives you 39 different single battles, called Maneuvers. If the challenge seems lacking, try a Campaign, which begins at Omaha Beach and ends 20 miles inland at the strategic town of Saint-Lo. Get to Saint-Lo in less than 43 days (like the Allies did) and you win the game. Before tackling any of the Maneuvers or a Campaign, I recommend a few sessions in Close Combat's Boot Camp.

One of the first things you'll notice about Close Combat is that the soldiers under your command don't always follow orders. At times this can be a tad frustrating. (OK, it can make you mad as hell.) But there's a method to the madness: Instead of controlling pieces on a chessboard, you command individual soldiers on a tactical level. The game challenges you with a realistic representation of the complex and often unpredictable behavior of human beings under the stress of war. As in real life, your men are affected both mentally and physically by combat situations. To assess the mental toll, you can call up a detailed psychological profile for each solider.

Close Combat also boasts excellent artificial intelligence. It adjusts the strength of each side—American and German—from one Maneuver to the next throughout the Campaign, depending on the skill of the player. Kick butt in the earlier battles, and the AI will compensate, making sure the next round isn't so easy. This adjustment makes the game both more challenging for expert players and less frustrating for the novice commander. It also means that you'll never play the same game twice.

Overall, Close Combat's graphics are superb, but there's one major problem: While all of the game's elements may be true to scale (terrain, tanks, buildings, etc.), the soldiers are tiny and very difficult to see. This is especially true for the green-clad American forces, who tend to blend into the landscape. When playing as the Germans, I often mistook the American soldiers for shrubs—and paid the price in casualties.

The rest of the graphics are excellent, even if the attention to detail does make scrolling a bit sluggish (especially when the action's heavy). From the tanks to the tracer fire used in battle, Close Combat is the most realistic-looking military sim available.

The game's soundtrack is equally impressive. The shouts of "incoming" and the screams for a medic after one of your soldiers have been hit really add that extra touch of authenticity.

I do wish the game didn't run only on Windows 95. But if you're a fan of military sims and don't own this OS, Combat may be the title that forces you to put a crowbar in your wallet.

It's that good.

TIPS

- **Use smoke whenever you can to cover the movement of your troops. Fire into any smoke that the enemy creates.**
- **Don't keep your teams too close together. It makes them vulnerable to attacks from grenades, mortars, and artillery.**
- **Moving teams long distances will tire them out. Remember, some foot soldiers carry up to 70 pounds of gear.**
- **If you're playing as the Americans, remember that the majority of U.S. tanks are going to lose a one-on-one fight with their German counterparts. If you're going to take on a German tank, make sure you outnumber it.**
- **The German rifle teams have antitank weapons capable of destroying every American vehicle.**

Close Combat
Microsoft
800-426-9400
www.microsoft.com/games/

Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $44.95

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A-

Close Combat is a revolutionary tactical-level military sim.

NETWORKABLE, REAL-TIME, 3-D STRATEGIC WARFARE
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MAGIC The Gathering™

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Tracer

I always enjoy going into a game with fairly low expectations, then finding myself whittling away far more time than I would have thought. That's what you can expect from Tracer. Though it isn't exactly the next generation in gaming, it's definitely an enjoyable diversion, despite some minor shortcomings.

This puzzler places you, the 3D-rendered protagonist, on a giant grid filled with obstacles, useful items, and the way out. The grid is supposed to represent a computer system you're trying to hack. You must successfully maneuver through each of 50 successively difficult levels by laying down your limited number of colored tiles to create a path on which you can step. Like dominos, you can only connect a tile to one with matching colored sides, so you must practice frugal tile management. Thankfully, there are several stations along the grid where you can pick up as many tiles as you need to reach your 10-tile limit.

You'll need to outrun the Tracer Virus as you lay the appropriately colored tiles to the exit.

Tracer
7th Level
800-884-8863
www.7thlevel.com

Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 75, 8MB RAM, Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $30

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B-

Sounds easy so far, but there's also a Tracer Virus that's hot on your cyber-tail, slowly eating away at the trail you've left behind. You need to act quickly to get to bridges, elevators, extra tiles, and the exit before the Tracer Virus catches you and zaps you back into cyberspace.

Four tutorials help you with the finer points of the game, although there's none for the level editor, which really needs it. The graphics could use some work, too: although they're nice, they're not exactly state-of-the-art.

Still, for those who like puzzle games, Tracer's combination of pulse-pounding music, absorbing gameplay, 50 levels, and three difficulty settings will keep you entertained. —*Shane Mooney*

Sea Legends

Sea Legends takes a somewhat different approach to the standard sea-trading game: It actually has a story.

It's June 1667, and you're Richard Gray, the captain of the British frigate *Hefestus.* Newly assigned to Barbados, your job is to protect Her Majesty's shipping against the depredations of raiders; use the proceeds to maintain and expand your own fleet; trade shrewdly with merchants; pick up tips at the taverns; and search for treasure.

So what else is new under the Caribbean sun? Didn't Pirates Gold and High Seas Trader practice this same line of fare? Well, yes, they did. But in those games, you wrote the story yourself in the details of your passage through the game world. Here, dark forces are already at work as the curtain rises.

Your father is anxious about something regarding his brother—something he won't clearly define—before you set out for the islands. And who is present for your first meeting with the outgoing Barbados governor? Your scowl-faced uncle himself. He makes pointed reference to your earring, an heirloom given to you by your father. Guess what disappears when you're sent to summon the governor's captain and fall to drinking instead?

This thread gives Sea Legends an adventuresome tone—an original concept for a game of this sort, and one complemented by the occasional Kingdom-like animation (including various endings in which you see yourself written into the text of history as a black-and-white print).

Unfortunately, the other elements don't quite float. Yes, you can have 3D sea battles, but they're not especially handsome or engrossing. Ship boardings still hang on a 2D swordfight or two. The towns consist of static graphics with purposeless sound effects attached to certain objects. The character close-ups tend toward huge-eyed caricatures.

In short, there's just nothing truly compelling about the way this high-seas adventure plays.

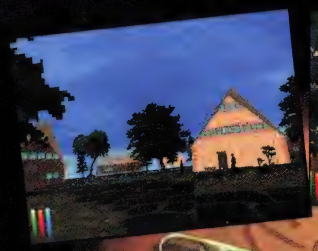
—*Peter Olafson*

Better brush up on your fencing skill, matey.

Sea Legends
Ocean
800-483-8632
www.oceanltd.com

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $39.95

GAMEPLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	C



EMPIRE OF TAMRIEL

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Official Hint Book
Daggerfall™ Chronicles
Available Now!

Prepare to experience your new obsession!

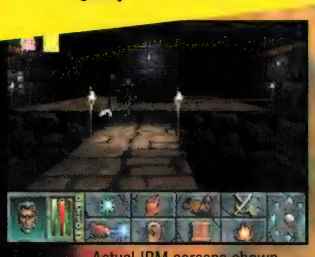
Revolutionary!
—Johnny Wilson
Editor-in-Chief,
Computer Gaming World

Announcing *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall*, Bethesda's latest installment in the Elder Scrolls Series and the sequel to the award-winning *TES:Arena*.

TES: Daggerfall is one of the most ambitious computer games ever devised. This is no dungeon hack, no bit of fluff with medieval trappings. Daggerfall's world is twice the size of Great Britain, filled with people, adventures, and scenery as real as reality. This is a world designed to allow you to play the game any way you want. Be the Hero or the Villain... or anything in between.

TES: Daggerfall is all your favorite movies and books wrapped up in one package — with hundreds and hundreds of hours of playtime. Prepare to experience your new obsession.

"This is the game that hardcore FRPG fans have been waiting for since the beginning ... Daggerfall will introduce players to a mirror land inside their computer that looks and feels like real-life ...."
—PC Gamer



Actual IBM screens shown

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THE ELDER SCROLLS® Chapter Two

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MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

We can't keep a secret

THE ULTIMATE QUAKE GUIDE

The secrets for all the levels of the first episode were in last month's feature. You'll find them on our Web site, www.pcgamesmag.com, plus an even more in-depth look at all of Quake's hidden intricacies.

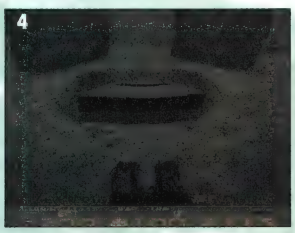
By Rob Smith

Finding secret rooms full of power-ups, ammo, and health is generally considered a nonessential bonus. But Quake's difficulty, especially in the later episodes, is such that getting those Quad damage power-ups can make the difference between success and abject failure. So here is *PC Games*' complete guide to all the secret rooms, the secret levels, and even a couple of little surprises so you can enjoy every aspect of the game. It's up to you to discover exactly what each secret holds, but we'll tell you where each one is.

Episode 2: The Realm of Black Magic

E2M1: The Installation

1. In the gold-key room, the set of bars on the right (when facing the key) has a ledge and a very slim staircase that you can jump up. Walk through the wall for the secret.
2. In the same room, jump in the water and follow it through to the right, then go up the ramp into a secret area.
3. In the open room with the walkway across the water, jump in to the left of the walkway. Swim down to the far corner. Look up to see a tunnel that leads up to a secret area.



4. Opposite the gold-key door, jump over the rail into the water. Find the grate on the floor and shoot it. Swim down the shaft. At the bottom, shoot the second grate on the wall to open the door for secret No. 5. Follow the path to the secret room above, which is secret No. 4.
5. Providing you've shot the grate mentioned above, another side room will have opened in this room, which is secret No. 5.
6. At the cage with the metal boxes inside, jump over the first elevator into the gap behind and shoot the left wall.

7. After going up all the elevators, enter the cage through a gap between two of the bars. Drop down to the bottom to get the secret.

E2M2: The Ogre Citadel

1. Near the beginning of the mission, jump into the river. Go left and walk to the back wall, where an elevator will take you up to the secret.
2. Stay in the water, going to the left under the bridge with the yellow armor. Go around to the right into a small room.

3. From the window where an ogre fires at you from across the water, jump off the edge of the window onto a ledge. Follow the ledge around to a secret room.

E2M3: The Crypt of Decay

1. At the first bridge, jump off and follow the arrows under the bridge. Under the water, two arrows point to a set of steps that lead up to a secret.
2. Kill the zombie shooting at you from a platform. A door to the left of the gold-key door will open, leading to the platform.
3. Once you grab the gold key, three doors will open. Shoot the back wall of the room (the one with a torch in it (to the right). Remember how you got here.

4. Where you can see the level exit arch to your right, go to your left. Shoot the red switch on the ceiling. Go into the room that opens and flick the switch to get the message "The underwater barrier is lowered."

Finding E2's Secret Level

After triggering the message at secret No. 4, go back to secret No. 3. Jump into the pool and go through the arch to the slipgate leading to "The Underearth."

Here's another little extra: Remember how shooting the symbol on the wall leading to the fourth episode triggered the "Well of Wishes is in the Crypt of Decay" message? To get to the Well of Wishes, go through the hallway where nails are fired. On the walkway, look back to the right, where there's a ledge with a Quad damage (look carefully, because it's very dark). Jump across and then find the very thin ledge leading off around the wall. Walk around until you get to an opening. Jump in to the well and descend to find a few surprises.

-SOME THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT UNDISCOVERED-

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Strategy & Tactics

E2M4: The Ebon Fortress

1. At the start, hug the wall to the right of the island with the grenade launcher.
2. From the room with the stained glass windows high up, go left until you get to an elevator. Go up and over the bridge, down the stairs, and then turn around to your left. Shoot the back wall there.
3. From here, go up the next stairs to the wooden slope to the wall. Jump onto the thin ledge and walk around to the right until you see a wooden-style panel on the wall. Shoot it to reveal a secret.
4. Just below where you get the silver key is a gap with a strip of toxic slime. Jump into this and go to the end for a secret and a biosuit.

E2M5: The Wizard's Manse

1. At the beginning, after killing the ogre on the rock platform, jump into the water and swim around the rock column until you find an opening with an elevator. It takes you up to a secret.

2. After getting the gold key, go back the way you came. Look to the right and find the area where the pattern on the wall doesn't continue in one section. Shoot this area to reveal a secret.

E2M6: The Dismal Doubliette

1. After getting to the second floor, to your right is a piece of wall with a different texture—it looks like a metal plate over the wall. Shoot it to uncover a secret.
2. Get to the area that has a bar across it, remove the bar, go back, and then jump into the water. Turn around underwater and swim under the platform you were standing on to get a secret.

The Secret Level E2M7: Underearth

1. To the left of the gold-key door is a brick sticking out of the wall. Push it in to bring down a column to your left.
2. Through the gold-key door is a slime pit. Go across the bridge, turn around, and look down to see a small alcove opening. Jump in and go in there for the biosuit. Then go out to the three pillars. Behind the third is an area you can swim down to get a secret. Be quick, because you have to get back up and use the switch on the wall to get out of the slime.

Another special little area: If you shoot the gargoyle faces on the walls, you'll notice that on the first shot they bleed. Shoot all these faces on the level, then go to the second niche in the corridor with the crazy flashing light. Shoot the wall there for another surprise. Anybody know who those initials belong to?

Episode 3: The Netherworld E3M1: Termination Central

1. After the start, take the left ramp down and shoot the darkened area to the right under the walkway for a secret.
2. Get to the large square platform over a toxic pool that has the Quad damage on it. Go to the other side of the platform from the Quad, then jump into the slime and swim ahead and through the opening there. Once you're on the other side, the secret is triggered.
3. On the same platform, look down between the two sets of steps. You can jump on to that ledge by just slipping off the edge of the platform. Take the elevator in that area to get to the beams above the platform.

4. Before the metal boxes, to the left of the elevator, is an area covered in shadows. Go into the area and find the thin ledge, which leads to another secret.
5. Find the metal boxes near the gold-key door. Jump up on the boxes to the top and then find the wall with a slightly different texture. Shoot it for a secret.

E3M2: Vaults of Zin

1. Near the beginning, at the area where you have to jump across to get a Quad damage, jump down to the lava and then hop out onto the platform there for the secret.

2. At the open area with the large crucifix painting on the wall, one of the walls has a different texture. Shoot this area to reveal a slipgate to the secret.
3. Looking at the crucifixion picture, shoot the area of wall just to the right of the main image. A door will open for another secret.

E3M3: The Tomb of Terror

1. At the top of the stairs that come out of the lava, look up to the right and shoot the Q symbol up there. A door with a teleporter will open below it, leading to the secret.
2. At the next intersection, turn right. In the room at the end is a small strip of water next to the steps. Dive in to find the secret.

E3M4: Satan's Dark Delight

1. After getting across to the rocket launcher, turn the corner to the left and go down the ramp. Go up the other ramp leading out and then turn and shoot the yellow light. This will bring out the stairs leading up to a ledge and a secret.

2. While on the first platform across the water, look down to see a ledge with two health packs. Jump down to it. The walls will open to reveal a secret.
3. In the same room as secret No. 2, shoot each of the four lights— note that they "bleed" on the first shot—to open another secret room.
4. After getting off the moving platforms, you will come to a room with six lights overhead. Shoot the one that is yellow to open a door with a secret.

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Strategy & Tactics

Finding E3's Secret Level

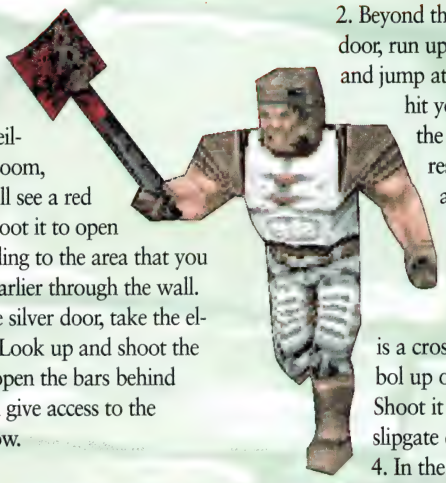
Near the end, after picking up the lightning gun, turn around and look down under the stairs. A hole in the middle of the lava leads to a teleporter and the secret level.

E3M5: Wind Tunnels

1. After emerging from the first wind tunnel, climb the stairs. The passage that leads off with flickering lights has a hole in one of the corners. Drop down to register the secret.
2. After defeating the Shambler, you'll come to a ledge with another ledge below you and a pool a long way below that. Go to the side of the ledge opposite the door, look up, and shoot the Q symbol on the beam. A door opens next to where you entered this area.
3. After going through the third wind tunnel in the main entrance area, go down the stairs into the next room. Jump into the moat and go under the room. An archway leads to a secret.
4. When facing the end-of-level slipgate, shoot the floor in the middle of the room. Hop down but avoid going in the teleporter there. The ledge around this teleporter registers as a secret.

E3M6: Chambers of Torment

1. Pick up the silver key and then look up at the ceiling of the room, where you'll see a red symbol. Shoot it to open a door leading to the area that you could see earlier through the wall.
2. After the silver door, take the elevator up. Look up and shoot the button to open the bars behind you, which give access to the beams below.



Secret Level E3M7: The Haunted Halls

1. In the room with the yellow armor, shoot the grate with a landing in front of it to get to the secret. You'll get a power-up that's very handy for slaying one of the monsters around the corner.
2. After this room, take the elevator up, but jump back off of it as it's ascending to get in to the area underneath, which triggers a secret.
3. Get through the corridor with the nails shooting to reach the button needed to lower the elevator. Look up and find the small symbol. Shoot it to open a secret door.
4. From the bridge high up, look down to see a cage. Jumping onto the cage will open a secret door in front of you.

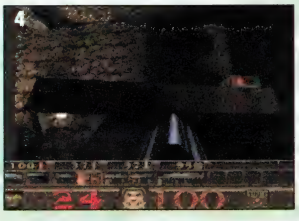
Episode 4: The Elder World E4M1: The Sewage System

1. After going up the elevator, you'll see a piece of wall that looks like a computer monitor. Shoot it.

2. Beyond the gold-key door, run up the ramp and jump at the top to hit your head on the yellow fluorescent light above. A door opens.
3. In the room with the biosuit is a crosshair symbol up on the wall. Shoot it to open a slipgate door.
4. In the last room, under the water, before reaching the exit slipgate, look up and to your left to spot a thin opening to a secret.

E4M2: The Tower of Despair

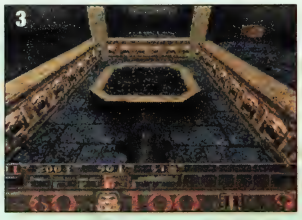
1. At the start, shoot the large red window, then push the knife plate.
2. Turn right out of the first room. At the end, shoot the wall and find the other knife switch.
3. The knife plate in No. 2 opens the floor outside. Drop down onto the beam in the first room.



4. At the second large red symbol, jump onto the suspended beam, walk up and turn to your right. There's a secret through the dark recess when you jump down onto the beam.
5. After jumping through the red symbol window, to the right of the knife plate, shoot the wall.

E4M3: The Elder God Shrine

1. At the room with a small pool of water surrounding a lift, go up on the lift and walk into the stained-glass windows in front of you.
2. In the blue-walled area, hug the passageway to the right until you get to the switch on the wall. Press it and the floor lowers to a secret.



3. In the same room as secret No. 2, stand on the lift to send it up, then hop off and enter the teleporter hidden underneath.

E4M4: The Palace of Hate

1. At the top of the ramp in the first room, shoot the light-brown sun symbol high on the archway.
2. Through that archway is a "Healing Pool." Jump into the pool to get credit for a secret.
3. Find the wooden platform that raises. Trigger the platform, then jump off to get underneath it into a secret area.
4. In the blue maze area at a dead end, two wall sections drop. As you face the end wall, stand on the lowered wall to the left. It'll raise, and you can jump to the other side.
5. At the silver-key area, there's a teleporter suspended off the floor. The only way I've found to get in is to do a "rocket jump": Point your rocket launcher at the ground, then fire and jump, and you should be able to leap into the teleporter. Obviously, this is not to be attempted when you're low on health.

E4M5: Hell's Atrium

1. Step on the floor switch behind the gold-key door. Jump on the el-

AREA 51
ATLANTIS
BERMUDA TRIANGLE
ILLUMINATI
JFK ASSASSINATION
PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT
ROSWELL INCIDENT

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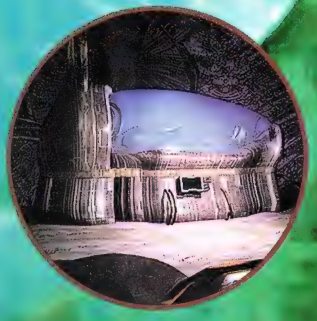

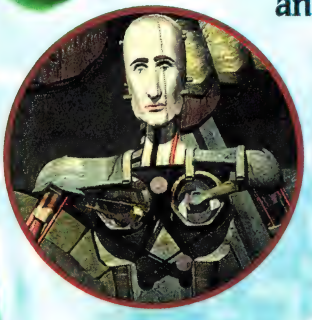

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Strategy & Tactics

evator, then shoot the red symbol behind you. Jump across on the platform to a secret.

2. In the maze of rooms with zombies in each nook and cranny, get to the room with a switch on the floor and a Quad damage in one of the openings. One of the rooms off here is larger than the others. Go in there and shoot the right wall. Take the elevator up and jump in the slime at the top for the secret.
3. Up on that same ledge, face away from the slime. Turn left and jump over the gap. Walk past the pillar divide to the left and turn left (the only way to turn). Jump over the gap and go straight into the open area for the secret.
4. Where you can see cell packs on the beams overhead, jump onto the nearest torch, then jump onto the beam. Hop across the beams to get the cells to get credit for finding a secret—but it's probably more hassle than it's worth.

Finding E4's Secret Level

At the end of the level, don't use the silver key to bring down the platform to the poles. Save your game and try to hop across on the very narrow poles. If you get to the other side, to the left of the exit door is another door needing the silver key. It leads to the secret level.

E4M6: The Pain Maze

1. In the room at the beginning, look behind the columns to find a switch that opens a door straight ahead.

2. Jump into the little pool at the edge of the room. Look up as you swim forward, and swim up to the green-colored area to get to the secret.
3. In the room with the beams and the teleporter high up, stand on the beam against the wall near the red armor. Shoot the large circle on the ceiling and the ledge raises to enable you to jump to the armor.
4. In the same room as No. 3, underneath the elevator, in the water, shoot the wall with the green coloring.

E4M7: The Azure Agony

1. In the small room with a Quad damage, you'll get dropped in to the slime. Rather than take the teleporter straight ahead, turn to the right. Around the corner is another teleporter to a secret.

2. One of the sets of steps in this maze (by the two bright lights together) has a red symbol behind it. Stand on the steps and shoot it. The steps raise to register a secret.
3. A Vore is to the right of the second secret. Kill it and just walk into its lair to find a secret.
4. In this same area, face the wall with the single light. Two brightened patches stand out in anomalous fashion in the shadows. They are both secrets.
5. In the penultimate room with the water and a cross of walkways, go into the water and shoot the wall underneath where the Pentagram of Protection was.
6. In the same area underwater, shoot the wall below where the Quad damage was for a portal leading to the ledge above secrets 2, 3, and 4. Getting onto this ledge will also qualifiy as a secret.

7. In the water you leap across after shooting the red symbol on the ceiling is a set of steps with a button underneath. This opens a wall back where the bio-suit was hanging in the maze.

Secret Level E4M8: The Nameless City

1. Find the button on a wall over the passage. Run, jump, and press the button. Past the zombies is a lift to a Shambler. Jump down the hole in this room.

2. After secret No. 1, take the ramp to where a hole descends into some water. There is a ledge near the water level. Jump to the ledge.
3. After exiting the dark room with the cage, take the elevator and jump across the gap. Get the gold key and go to the gold-key doors. Go inside the secret area.
4. After going through the silver door, take the right ramp up. Drop through the beams at the triangle-shaped gap.

Shub: Niggurath's Pit

1. Fight your way through to the teleporter—or hop across onto the island—and to the right of this teleporter is a ledge leading to a Quad damage and a teleporter.

Well, there you have it: the way to every secret Quake holds! It's up to you to supply the initiative to find out what goodies lie in each of them. Good luck, and good hunting. ■

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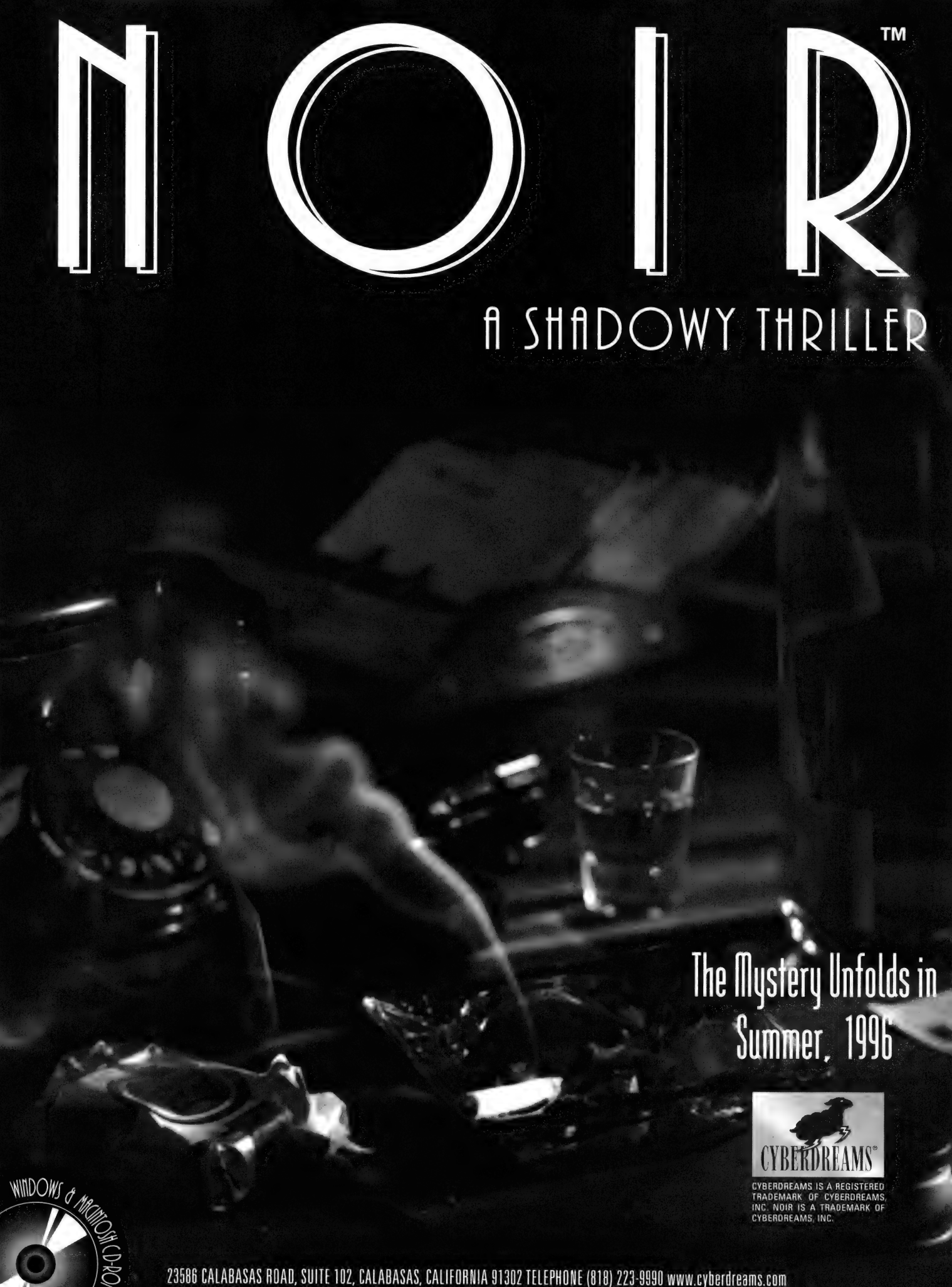

The Mystery Unfolds in Summer, 1996

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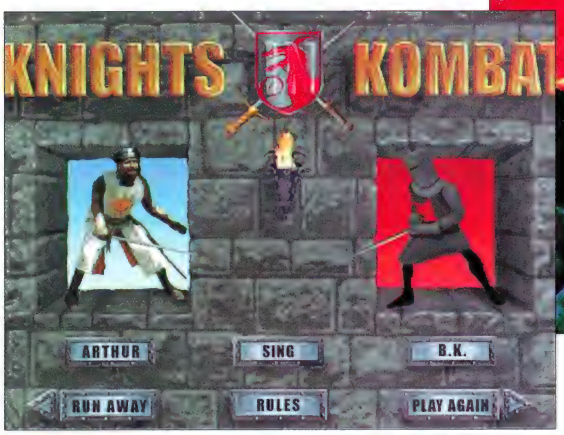
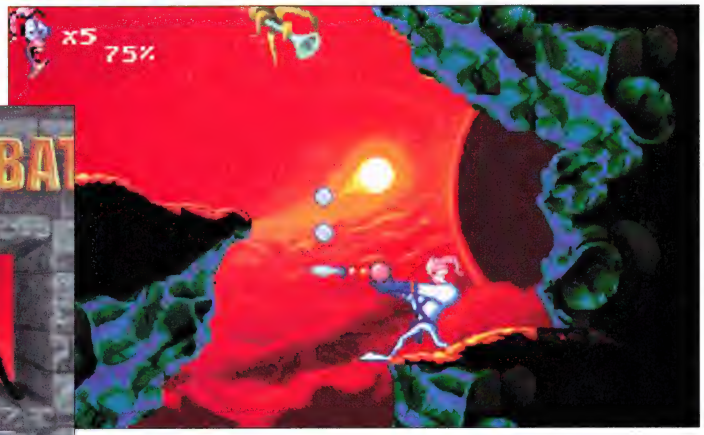


Monty Python



Earthworm Jim 2

Monty Python & the Quest for The Holy Grail

Good lord! You need cheats for this game? You are *bloody stupid, aren't you?*

In the Options screen (where you can choose to get the grail, see the film, or register), type in URANUS. This turns on all right arrows and lets you visit any location on the map.

In Witch Village and Loimbard, type NOLEAF to see a naked witch.

At any time during gameplay, type KING BRIAN SCENE for a useless reminder concerning this game-ending scene.

In the Book of the Game, type ALLCLIPS. This lets you take a look at all of the video clips on the Grail Vision page.

Fire Fight

"Fire—fire—fire!!!"

"Dammit, Beavis! Every once in a while a cool cheat comes along, and you've got to talk the whole time!"

To access the cheat menu, simultaneously press C, W and the (+) key on the numeric keypad. You can now do the following:

(1) Hit F12 to choose between Restore Shields, Full Weaponry, and Invulnerability. Select one of these options and press Enter, then hit Esc to go back to the game. Repeat the process to select more than one cheat.

(2) Go to the Missions menu. You'll find you can now choose any of the missions by scrolling down to it and hitting F12.

Fire Fight

Earthworm Jim 1 & 2: The Whole Can O' Worms

Once, he was a lowly worm. Now he's a hero with an attitude—and he's not gonna let Psy-Crow get the best of him.

Pause each game before entering codes.

Earthworm Jim 1

NOBLE: Full energy

YOU ARE SOD: Invincibility

DO NOT GO THERE: See ending

Level codes:

TEAKETTLE-FAUCET-COW-FAUCET-COW-FAUCET: What the Heck?

PAINT-FAUCET-TV-FAUCET-CONE-TV: Down the Tubes

CONE-TEAKETTLE-CONE-COW-COW-TEAKETTLE: Pod Races

COW-TEAKETTLE-TV-COW-TEAKETTLE-PAINT: Snot a Problem

TV-TV-COW-TINCAN-COW-HAMMER: Level 5

TEAKETTLE-PAINT-TINCAN-FAUCET-PAINT-FAUCET: Darkness

COW-TV-TEAKETTLE-COW-TEAKETTLE-PAINT: Peter Puppy

TINCAN-TV-TV-TEAKETTLE-CONE-COW: Buttville

CONE-FAUCET-COW-COW-COW-TV: Andy Asteroids

Earthworm Jim 2

BOOSTER: Full energy

LUEHMANN: Invincibility

JUST CUT TO THE END: See ending

Level codes:

FRUIT: Anything but Tangerines

DUBLIN: Puppy Love

HOFFMAN: Flyin' King

ABROWN: Cow Abduction

SHINY SHINES: Inflated Head

MORTIFICATOR: Hammer Head

QUIZ SHOW: Blind Sally

BLUE: ISO 9000

MORRISON: Door Chase

CARLOSR: Level Ate

GOMBA: Flamin' Yawn

CHASE: See Jim Run

CHEATS

continued on page 118

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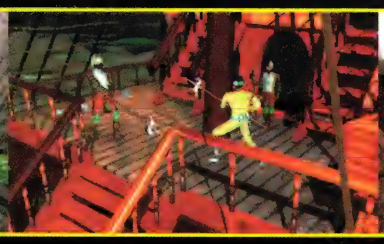

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continued from page 116

Space Hulk: Vengeance Of the Blood Angels

"Glory to the Emperor! Death to the Genestealers!" This time, make sure *you win.*

At the screen with two doors, type INEEDHELP. You'll now be able to choose whether or not you want the following options:

Invincible Player

Invincible Terminators

Easy Close Assault

Player Always Wins

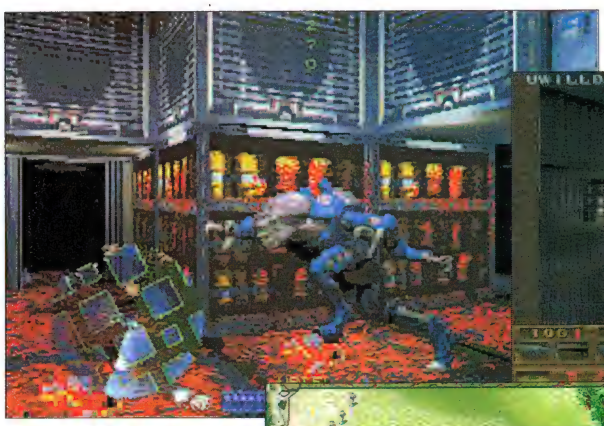
No New Stealers

Infinite Freeze Time

Infinite Ammo

No Jams or Malfunctions

Campaign



Space Hulk

Quake

Settlers II

Witchaven II

Quake

Ever wonder what game reviewers do at deadline time? There's nothing like a little God mode/full weapons/Quad-power action to relieve stress.

Enter these commands at the console in the Options panel.

GOD: God mode

FLY: Fly up to the ceiling

IMPLUSE 9: All weapons

IMPLUSE 255: Quad damage

NOTARGET: Monsters don't attack first

NOCLIP: Walk through walls

MAP ExMy (where "x" and "y" are an episode and level number, respectively): Episode/level warp

DMx (where "x" is a level number): Play any of the six deathmatch levels

SV_GRAVITY x (where "x" is any number; you jump for miles)

GIVE SHELLS x ("x" can be any number up to 244)

GIVE NAILS x ("x" up to 244)

GIVE ROCKETS x ("x" up to 244)

GIVE CELLS x ("x" up to 244)

GIVE HEALTH: Kills you

Shellshock

New York, 1997. Terrorism. Oppression. Chaos. Time for Da Wardenz to kick ass and take names.

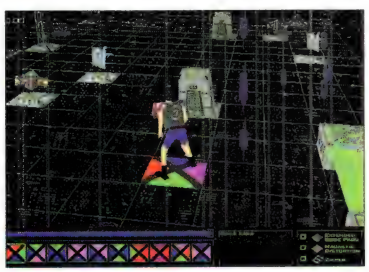
To become invincible, hit Esc to pause the game, and then type RATTY RAT RATTY.

Tracer

Having trouble hacking? Here's a way to beat the system.

Ctrl + Shift + V: Toggles the Tracer virus on/off

Ctrl + Shift + G, then x (where "x" equals a level number): Warps you to another level



Tracer

Witchaven II

Cirae-Argoth's one steamed witch, and if you're not careful, you'll be one dead warrior. Arm up, power up, and venture forth with these magic words.

To use these cheats, press Backspace, type in a code, and then hit Return.

MARKETING: God mode

WEAPONS: All weapons

ENCHANT: Enchant weapons

SPELLS: All the spells

SCARE: Casts Scare spell

NIGHTVISION: Casts Night Vision spell

NUKE: Casts Nuke spell

FREEZE: Casts Freeze spell

MAGICARROW: Casts Magic Arrow spell

OPENDOORS: Casts Open Doors spell

FLY: Casts Fly spell

FIREBALL: Casts Fireball spell

POTIONS: All the potions

STRENGTH: Drink Strength potion

HEALTH: Drink Health potion

CUREPOISON: Drink Cure Poison potion

RESISTFIRE: Drink Resist Fire potion

ARMOR: Adds armor

KEYS: All the keys

INVIS: Invisibility

LEVELx (where "x" is a number from 1 to 15): Warps you to a level

NOBREAK: Disables weapon breakage

SHOWMAP: Shows full map

EXPERIENCE: Adds 10,000 to experience

Settlers II: Veni, Vidi, Vici

God games rule. And with these handy little cheats, you'll have even more control over your little serfs.

During gameplay, type THUNDER. Now, type Alt-F7 to reveal the entire map, or type Alt-1 through Alt-6 to change the speed of the game.

Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Send your cheat-code requests to *PC Games*, Attn: Strategy & Tactics, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; e-mail: ccohen @iftw.com.

Compiled by Corey Cohen

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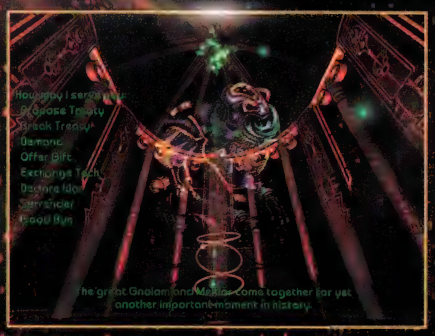

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By Christine Grech Wendin

DSVD Modem Migraines

They may look like regular old modems, but these early DSVD pioneers promise to let you talk and play over a single telephone line—provided you can get them running, and they're connected to an identical modem.

Simultaneous Voice and Data (SVD) modems are the next big thing to hit the hardware-gaming market. What makes this new breed of modems special is that they let you play a game and talk to your opponent at the same time—over a single telephone line. Last month we gave you the scoop on the SVD standard wars that are currently taking place among hardware manufacturers (see Tech Shop, September 1995, page 98). Some modem-makers are going the digital route (DSVD), while others are opting for an analog approach (ASVD). We advised you that your best bet is to wait until the new V.70 DSVD standard is ratified and modems complying with the standard are available. When you buy a V.70 modem, you'll be guaranteed that it will work with any other V.70 modem, regardless of the manufacturer.

If you simply can't wait that long, you have several proprietary DSVD modems to choose from right now, including Amquest's Commando, Eiger Labs' HeadOn, Hayes' Accura 288, Shark Multimedia's Tiger-288R, and U.S. Robotics' Sportster Vi 28.8 Faxmodem with DSVD. Of these five companies, Amquest, Hayes, and Shark Multimedia say that they are planning to upgrade their modems to V.70 soon; Eiger Labs and U.S. Robotics are waiting until the standard is ratified before announcing their plans.

To see what type of DSVD gaming experience you can get right now, we tested pairs of these five internal modems. Overall, we found it nearly impossible to get everything working properly—if at all—on our Windows 95 test systems. In fact, we feel that none of these modems is quite ready for prime time, or is even worthy of being rated. But if you're what they call an "early adopter" and want a DSVD modem *now*, your best bet is the Hayes' Accura, which will eventually be upgraded to V.70.

All in all, it was a pretty disappointing roundup. We were ready to play and talk trash all night, but instead we spent several days messing with fussy hardware and initialization strings. It's an exciting technology—one that surely will become standard in a couple of years—but right now, it's truly bleeding edge. If you want to talk while playing modem games, get a second phone line instead.

Accura 288

We got off to a promising start with the Accura, thanks to its hassle-free Windows 95 installation. Our systems recognized the modems and they worked in non-DSVD mode, simply dialing out and connecting to one another—from Windows. After carefully reading the Accura's thorough manual and installation instructions, however, we learned that this was only half the battle. We also had to go through a DOS installation routine, which had us running installation software from Windows 95's DOS mode, then manually editing the DOSSTART.BAT file to include a line of modem settings. Not exactly hassle-free, but at least the modem seemed to be working in DOS mode and Hayes realizes that gamers can't be confined to playing games only within Win 95.

Now came the true test: Would it function in DSVD mode? Not so fast; we couldn't just have one machine simply dial up the other. We had to set up our game—Duke Nukem, of course—to tell the modem to go into DSVD mode. Things really got fun now, as we had to type in initialization strings that were more than 20 characters

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long. To confuse matters even further, we had conflicting information as to which string works with Duke Nukem; the modem came with a gaming instruction sheet that said one thing while the information we got at Hayes' Web site sold another.

In the end, the string we got from the Web site worked best. According to Hayes' technical support, that's because it has more options, like error-correction, turned on. It worked—but not always perfectly. For example, sometimes the player waiting for the phone call couldn't hear it ring, so he wouldn't know to pick up the telephone handset when a game had begun. Good thing we had Duke's typing option.

Once we had everything working properly using the handset, we tried connecting using a headset and microphone so that we wouldn't get permanent kinks in our neck from shooting and talking trash during our marathon Dukematches. Ultimately, we were unable to get this working right on both systems, even when we tried various additions to the game's initialization string and different input settings—speakers plugged directly into the modem, for example, not the sound card.

Hayes ships the Accura with a set of tiny earphones, but they're useless because the cord is so short. When they're plugged in, you have to lean almost to the back of your computer to put the buds in your ears.

The company also throws in a copy of NASCAR Racing. At Hayes' Web site, you'll find setting information for many other popular games.

Hayes says it plans to upgrade the Accura to V.70 support once the standard is ratified. (Hayes; 770-441-1617; www.hayes.com; $229 internal, $249 external)

Commando

The Commando isn't just a modem; it's also a sound card and CD-ROM interface—and possibly more. That's because the unit is based on IBM's MWave DSP technology, which adds functions to the card with software upgrades. So, when V.70 is ratified, Amquest will be able to offer easy upgrades with some new software.

While all of that sounds great, the multifaceted nature of the card also creates some headaches. Because it does double or triple duty in your system, the Commando is a resource hog. Sure, you can disable the functions you won't use, like the sound card in favor of your Sound Blaster, but you'll invariably have numerous conflicts when you first set it up.

To make matters worse, the installation instructions and routine that Amquest provides with the card are confusing. The documentation barely mentions Win 95, while the CD-ROM full of software and drivers is strictly intended for DOS and Windows 3.1. Nor do the instructions match the software that comes with the Commando. As for DSVD, the manual doesn't address this feature at all, while the installation instruction sheet briefly mentions it but gives no help for how to do it. What it does tell you, though, is that the Commando only supports DSVD at 14.4Kbps.

Regardless, we went through the standard Windows installation routine, which meant running four separate setup programs—none of which prompted Win 95 to recognize the card in the system. We weren't able to manually point Win 95 to the appropriate driver, either. Of course, we kept getting conflicts when the system would restart, but we couldn't use Win 95's Conflict Troubleshooter to help resolve them because Win 95 still hadn't recognized the card. Thankfully, the Commando comes with an "uninstall" routine, which we used. But it didn't remove all of the associated MWave software programs or references in our startup files.

After several attempts at reinstalling the card and tweaking settings on both test systems, we turned to Amquest's Web site for help. Here we discovered Windows 95–specific installation instructions, as well as downloadable drivers. The troubleshooting stuff on the site is the same as in the manual, with emphasis on the fact that the MWave takes up a lot of system resources and you will probably have a conflict. But because it would take us almost five hours to download all the drivers, we had to pass. We suggest you do the same. (Amquest; 800-577-3335; www.amquestcorp.com; $249)

HeadOn

Next up was Eiger Labs' HeadOn, a promising card because it's targeted specifically for head-to-head gaming. To that end, Eiger runs a BBS and Web site that acts as a meeting point for HeadOn gamers to find and connect with one another. Unfortunately, we never made it that far, because we were unable to get the card functioning as a standard gaming modem.

Like the Commando, the HeadOn is a software-based modem, which means that it can be upgraded with a new driver disk. In fact, the 14.4Kbps modem that we received came with a diskette to upgrade it to 28.8Kbps. The installation instructions for doing so aren't too clear, and make you delete older versions of files from the initial installation routine. But our biggest problem with the card is that you must go through separate DOS and Windows installation routines, each of which assigns the board separate COM port and IRQ settings.

In the end, we were unable to get the board working on either of our two systems, even though Win 95 reported no conflicts and it seemed as though it should function.

If you do get it going, you can play one of several shareware games that ship with the card. The package also includes a quality headset.

continued on page 132

Headache Relief

Installing any internal card into your PC is a brave endeavor—even with the help of Windows 95's Plug and Play support and Device Manager utility. And when it comes to immature technology such as DSVD modems, things are even trickier. While we weren't successful with every modem we tried, we do have some pointers that will help make the process as hassle-free as possible.

•You've heard it before, we'll tell you again: Read the manual and installation instructions that come with the board before doing anything.

•Before installing a new modem, make sure you completely remove your old modem and its associated software and drivers from your system. To do this in Win 95, go to the Control Panel and select the Modems icon, then simply select the Remove button. If your modem is actually a multifunction card, like the Commando or Tiger, you will also have to remove the parent card from your system. To remove the card, select the System icon, select the Device Manager tab, highlight the item listed as Multifunction Board, and then select Remove.

•Also, if you are installing a multifunction card, make sure that you read the installation manual especially carefully to find out how to install only the functions that you want, such as modem only and not the sound functions, or how to disable these functions. That way, you'll avoid unnecessary device conflicts with existing sound boards or other peripherals. If you decide to use all of a multifunction board's features, make sure you completely uninstall your existing sound board.

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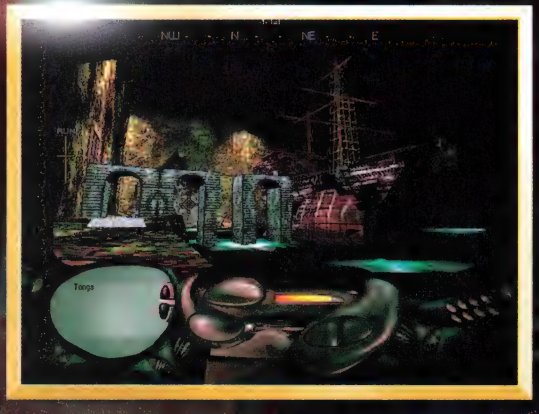

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TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

By David Gerding

Easy as 1-2-3D

Like most gamers, you're probably waiting anxiously for the latest 3D boards and deciding whether to fork out the cash. But let's face it: You don't know digits about 3D technology; you just know you want fast, hi-res graphics. It's not your fault that you can't tell tessellation from transformation, or that you thought MIP mapping might still be illegal in some states. This is complicated stuff.

Have no fear: We're going to reveal the secrets that make 3D graphics happen and help you see which 3D features to look for when shopping for a board.

Get set to learn all about The Secret Life of Bob the Polygon.

Don't Be Square

Way back when computers used trusty old 2D graphics, the process of creating game displays was fairly straightforward: Programmers painted values in a grid of memory to create images. The individual values in each position in the grid—i.e., the familiar **pixels**, or picture elements that make up the images onscreen—represented the colors you got onscreen. Fill the screen with the right pixels and you could make the images *seem* to represent a three-dimensional space. Doom, for example, may have looked like it had 3D graphics, but it was all smoke and mirrors.

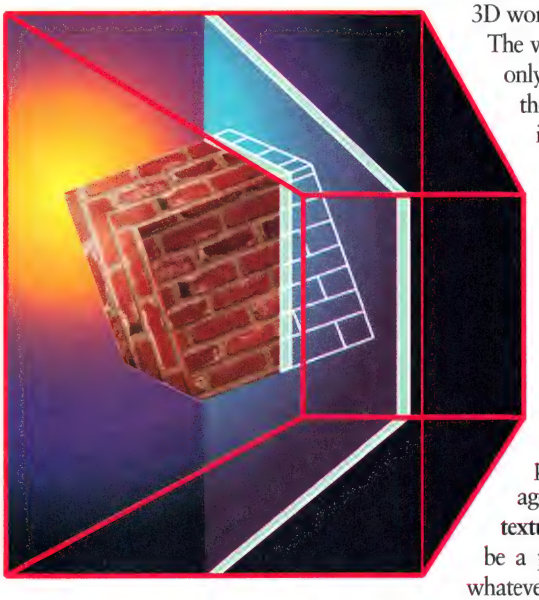
With 3D programming, the end goal is still to paint pixels in that grid. But unlike most 2D graphics, 3D graphics begin life as a series of data that describe physical shapes mathematically. Think back to Geometry 1 and consider a simple square. You can represent a square by plotting out the points that define its four corners. Each of the corners has an X and Y *coordinate*. If we define four of these "coordinate pairs," or "vertices," we have the outline of a square.

Let's call our imaginary square Bob and give him some depth—literally. We need to add an extra coordinate to our way of defining positions in space. This is called the Z axis. So X is left and right, Y is up and down, and Z is **depth**—a line extending from your eyes to a TV screen, for instance. By adding a Z coordinate to each of our four points, then adding four more points (also with a Z reference), we've defined a cube. Bob has entered the third dimension.

OK, here's a simple task for us: Get an image of Bob, the simple cube, spinning onscreen. Our mission seems straightforward, but Bob is going to have to do a little traveling.

The 3D Graphics Pipeline

The graphics pipeline is the series of steps it takes to convert the abstract 3D representation of Bob into something cool we can see onscreen. Every step in the following graphics pipeline is executed *each time* a single *frame* of the world is rendered, or drawn, to the screen. The pipeline starts with the basic 3D information about shapes that we discussed above. It adds to and refines this information, then, eventually, converts that data into the pixels that make up the onscreen image.



Geometry and Setup

The first few steps in getting Bob ready for the big screen involve **translation**, **transformation**, and **clipping**. Translation and transformation adjust Bob's coordinates so that they make sense in relation to the overall 3D scene that is going to be rendered. It's a matter of making Bob's coordinates relative to and consistent with everything else in the scene. Clipping involves figuring out mathematically which parts of an object are part of the scene and which parts, if any, are outside, or "clipped," from this logical viewing area.

The logical view into the 3D world is constructed like a pyramid with its top chopped off. The smaller top of the pyramid represents our viewport into the world, which is eventually the surface of our monitor. The bottom of the pyramid represents the back edge of the 3D world we're going to get to see onscreen. The world may be logically bigger, but the only thing we have a chance of seeing in the frame is every 3D object that is logically defined *inside* that chopped-off pyramid shape.

Lighting and Textures

Since this is a 3D world, we need to make sure there is one or more **lighting sources** defined so that we can see what is happening. And since Bob is a little dreary-looking without some fancy clothes, the program adds in a reference to Bob that points to a bitmap, a plain old 2D image that in the 3D world is known as a **texture** or **texture map**. The texture could be a picture of wood, a wall surface, or whatever. Eventually, the pipeline will "wrap" that texture around Bob. In 3D graphics, it's the textures that make things look real—from the marble textures on Quake's walls to armor plating in MechWarrior 2.

Polygons and Tessellation

We've moved pretty far in the pipeline, and we're about to hit the point where most 3D graphics cards kick in and do their magic. That's right—up until now all this processing is handled by the CPU, which is why most decent 3D games require a Pentium processor.

Now, we know Bob's a square, but draw any shape connected by straight lines and you'll see that you can break it down into little triangular shapes called **polygons**. In order

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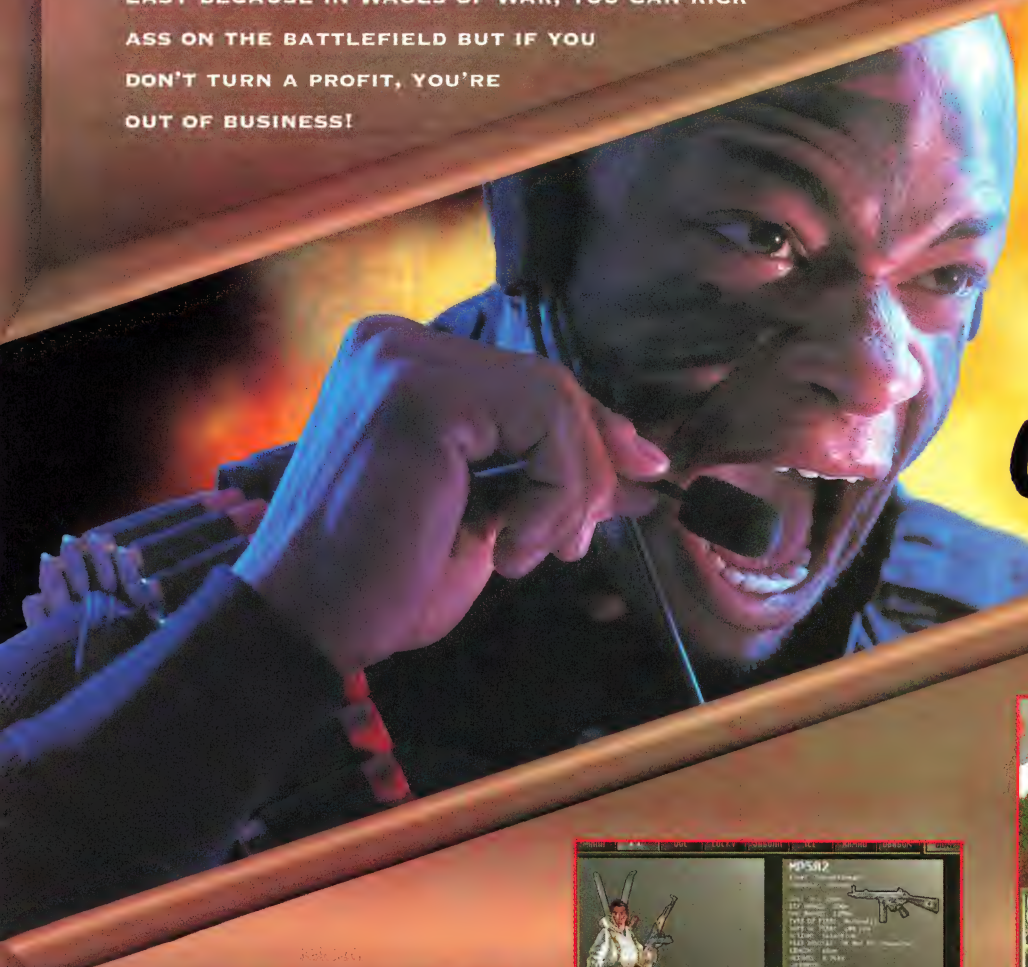

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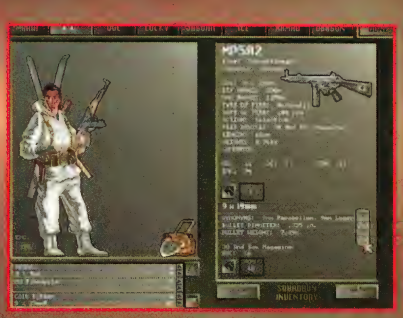

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to let the graphics hardware do its stuff, the "complex" polygons that define the 3D objects are broken down into simpler, smaller polygons that graphics hardware can handle faster. This process is called **tessellation**.

Rendering

Rendering is where the magic really happens, and it's where most current 3D accelerator cards come into play in terms of hardware acceleration. The basic rule is that the more of the 3D-rendering pipeline that's handled by specialized hardware rather than your CPU, the faster the 3D display. The rendering process is so complicated that it would be practically impossible to do decent real-time 3D rendering without hardware acceleration in some of the pipeline.

To begin the rendering process, we need to think back to our pyramid with the top chopped off. Logically, the small top of the pyramid is our viewport into the 3D world. In the reality of the computer, this "viewport" becomes the graphics memory, or "memory buffer," where the pixels will be stored, and in turn, written to the screen. The memory buffer that is going to be onscreen is called the **frame buffer**, because it holds the visual **frame** of animation that is being rendered.

Filling the frame buffer is essentially the process of sweeping an imaginary line back and forth inside our pyramid, much in the way a television screen is painted with an electron beam. A line is "projected" from one position in the frame buffer all through the 3D space. If at any point the projected line logically "hits" an object, a pixel is written into the frame buffer that represents the color of that part of the object. Meanwhile, a separate value, the Z-value, is stored in an identically sized memory buffer called the **Z-buffer**.

All the Z-buffer value represents is how deep (far away) into the pyramid the hit occurred. That way, if a subsequent hit occurs from a line projected from the same pixel, the new Z-value is compared to the old one. If the hit is closer, its pixel and Z-value replace the old ones and are shown onscreen, because they are closer and obscure the ones behind them. Pretty clever, huh? This process is repeated for each position in the frame buffer until the entire image has been rendered.

What happens when a surface is detected by this sweeping line determines the quality of the final image, because at this point, a whole bunch of tricks can improve the appearance of the rendered image.

Shading

While the surface of each 3D object has a specified default color, this is rarely the color that gets written to the frame buffer. For example, the effect of the light or lights within the scene is calculated for its effect on the appearance of the color from the vantage point of the viewport. This shading technique comes in three flavors: **flat**, which is the most basic technique; **Gouraud**, which produces a more natural effect; and **phong**, which is the most sophisticated sort but is not yet seen in most 3D PC games.

More important than shading for the look and feel of most games is the rendering of object textures. Let's say we've attached a brick texture to Bob. Rather than writing the default color for Bob's surface, the rendering engine looks at the attached texture map. It then must calculate where the texture would be on Bob's surface and do **perspective correction** so that the texture is oriented appropriately. Without perspective correction, a basic function of hardware-accelerated 3D, the textures on objects swim and distort from one rendered frame to the next.

The rendering engine may also apply a technique called **MIP mapping**. It's the solution to the old problem in Doom where walking too close to a wall resulted in just a few large, exploded-looking pixels on your screen. MIP mapping determines the logical depth or distance of the object from the viewport, then uses the texture best suited for that depth. So a cement wall stays gray at a distance but has fine details when viewed up close. The rendering engine is swapping textures on the fly.

Two other techniques that are *de rigeur* for any serious accelerator are **bi-linear** and **tri-linear filtering**. Bi-linear filtering averages surrounding pixels to soften and improve the appearance of textures as they are rendered. Tri-linear filtering combines this averaging technique with the MIP-mapping technique described above. MIP mapping and filters drastically improve the quality of the final image, even in scenes composed of relatively few polygons.

The final two techniques for improving image quality include **alpha blending** and **antialiasing**. Alpha blending is typically used to generate a fog effect. It basically blends each pixel with another color (usually a foggy white) depending on the depth. The farther away the effect, the more the fog color dominates, until it eventually becomes solid fog color. Fog depth is often set to coincide with the bottom of our beheaded pyramid because it's an easy way to hide the short depth of field in this little universe.

Antialiasing is a method that tries to eliminate the stair-stepping, or "jagged" pixels, at the edges of objects. The most common antialiasing technique is to make a smoother transition from the color of the object's edge to the color of the background. Antialiasing makes an object look smoother, but it can result in some blurring.

Heads Are Spinning

There—we've rendered a *single* frame of 3D animation. To get Bob spinning, we'd go in and translate his logical coordinates a few degrees, then render the entire frame again...and so on. Wasn't that easy? (No threatening letters, please!) ■

Are you ready for 3D graphics? Check out our Talk Back contest on page 144 and enter to win a Diamond Edge 3D!

3D Graphics Checklist

Now that you understand just what all that technobabble means, here's the list of 3D board features you should look for, in a basic, better, best format. You can mostly ignore claims of high polygon counts listed on product boxes, as these can be misleading.

Basic Board

- Flat and Gouraud Shading
- Perspective Corrective Texture Mapping
- Direct3D Driver Support (or promises to deliver one)

Better Board

Everything from the Basic, plus:

- Bi-Linear Texture Filtering
- Tri-Linear Filtering
- MIP Mapping
- Fog
- Alpha
- Lighting

Best Board

Everything from the Better boards, plus:

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- Composite Textures
- Antialiasing

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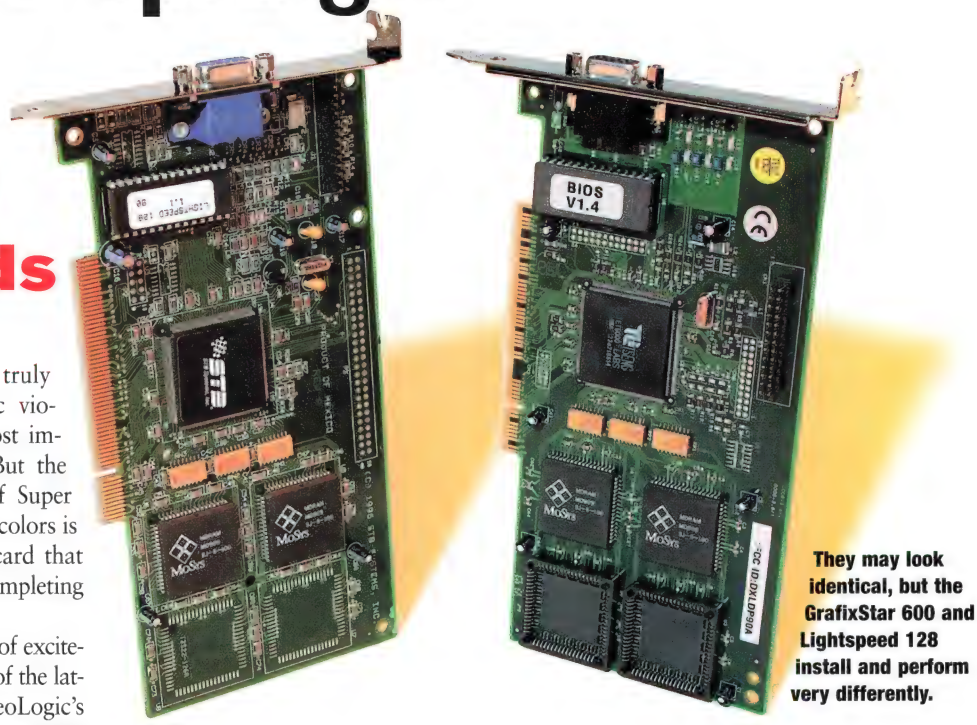
Hardware Spotlight

A Pair of Fast Cards



They may look identical, but the GrafixStar 600 and Lightspeed 128 install and perform very differently.

Today's entertainment is truly graphic: We've got graphic violence, graphic sex, and, most importantly, graphic games. But the problem with living in an era of Super VGA resolutions and 16.7 million colors is that finding an affordable video card that handles it all is as daunting as completing Quake using only your ax.

So it was with no small amount of excitement that we took a look at a pair of the latest 128-bit video boards: VideoLogic's **GrafixStar 600** and STB's **Lightspeed 128**. Though both units promised super-fast graphics performance and boasted nearly identical specs at a price that was easy to swallow, we found some big differences once we started using them.

Both the GrafixStar 600 and the Lightspeed 128 claim the fastest Windows graphics on the planet. Both feature 2.25MB of what's called MDRAM video memory (Multibank DRAM), which, thanks to its layout in independent memory banks, allows much quicker access comparable to VRAM. Both also use a Tseng Labs ET6000 128-bit graphic accelerator. More interestingly, both claim to be Plug and Play–a misnomer in at least one case.

GrafixStar 600

Rating: D

When we decided to swap out our existing 1MB DRAM Diamond Stealth for the GrafixStar, we realized that this particular Plug and Play card really wasn't. Two out of three times we tried to change to more than 16 colors, the GrafixStar would repeatedly reboot the system or lock up in Windows 95. A day later, we were finally able to get it to run without crashing, but, oddly enough, this was only when we loaded a VESA graphic utility called UniVBE first. Having been told by tech support that the GrafixStar's VESA drivers did everything UniVBE did, we were a bit surprised.

We did notice an improvement with several of the games we tested. In Windows, the GrafixStar could display roughly 1,600 pixels per second with 64,000 colors at 640-by-480 resolution, compared to the Diamond Stealth's 1,200 pixels running at the same color depth and resolution. This increase in pixels translated to much smoother Windows graphics in games like Phantasmagoria and EarthSiege 2.

DOS games also looked better, but the difference was far less dramatic. Quake played a little smoother in 640-by-480, but it still wasn't as smooth as it was in standard 320-by-200. Meanwhile, Rebel Assault II's video sequences were definitely better, with no hiccups in the video at all.

But just as we were getting to like the card, it went and crashed again, stuck in a continuous cycle of rebooting the computer from which it would never recover before we finally pulled the plug. Upon our second call to tech support, we learned that "it was a problem with Win 95, not the card itself." Time to move on. (VideoLogic; 800-578-5644; www.videologic.com; street price $179)

—Shane Mooney

Lightspeed 128

Rating: B+

Next we plugged in the Lightspeed 128 with serious trepidation, knowing that on paper it was virtually identical to the buggy GrafixStar. But guess what? We've used it for several weeks and not a problem yet! Setup was relatively painless, and occurred without a single crash.

The Lightspeed's Windows 95 performance was very similar to the GrafixStar's. Though not absolutely stellar in DOS, it still beat the old Stealth, even if it didn't play Quake nearly as well as we would have liked

continued on page 130

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ON CD

TECH SHOP, *continued from page 128*

in resolutions higher than 640-by-480. (We did, however, get to see what Quake looks like in an unplayable 1280-by-1024 resolution. Wow.) And unlike the GrafixStar's bundled Windows utilities, the ones that come with the Lightspeed actually worked. To top it off, STB also throws in the full versions of EarthSiege 2 and Silent Thunder, plus a special edition of Terra Nova.

Although it won't appeal to the deep-pocketed gamer who absolutely has to have the best DOS graphics, the relatively low price tag and impressive Windows performance of the Lightspeed 128 make it a solid card for those looking to upgrade. (STB Systems; 800-234-4334; www.stb.com; street price $169) —*Shane Mooney*

PC ARCADE TOP

PowerRamp

Rating: B

An idea long past its due, ACT Laboratories' **PowerRamp** is essentially an arcade top for your PC. By far the largest gamepad ever, it's an authoritative presence on a gamer's desk.

With a ball-topped arcade joystick and big coin-op buttons, the PowerRamp brings the quarter arcade feel to your home PC. To use it, you plug it into your keyboard port and then plug your keyboard into the PowerRamp. Then you go through a lengthy programming process to tailor the pad's buttons and grip to function as keys, allowing you to program multi-key combinations and special moves into a single function. This greatly facilitates play in fighting games, eliminating all the guesswork from combos and secret moves. If your opponent has a PowerRamp and you don't, he's going to be driving from the ladies' tee.

Thanks to a nifty Scroll Lock feature, you can even program functions that normally include pauses and multiple combinations. Best of all, you can program for up to four games at once, sparing you the ugly task of re-programming every time you switch games.

Programming is easy, if painstaking. You never really appreciate just how many keystrokes are involved in a PC fight until you have to meticulously account for them all. PowerRamp makes the task as painless as possible using some easily defined macros—and it was compatible with Battle Arena Toshinden, Virtua Fighter PC, and several other games we tested it with.

The PowerRamp is big and unsightly, its joystick makes a constant clicking noise, it requires patience to get used to...hey, this thing's more like a coin-op than I thought. But for a true arcade-top feel on your PC, PowerRamp is a solid choice. (ACT Laboratories; 800-980-9997; www.actlab.com/inventions.htm; $59.90)

—*Daniel Morris*

continued on page 132

Gaming Hardware Hall of Fame

Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy. Just check *PC Games*' running list of our top hardware recommendations. Each month, we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

Category	Product	Details	Our Rating
PC	Falcon Mach V	Falcon Northwest; 800-258-6778; approx. $4,000	A
Monitor	Nokia Valugraph 447L	Nokia; 800-296-6542; $699	B+
CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	B+
Sound card	AWE32	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $249.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; $219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; $69.95	A+
Gamepad	GrIP system	Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558; $99.95	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; $219 internal, $299 external	A
Graphics card	Lightspeed 128	STB Systems; 800-234-4334; street price $164	B+
Key add-on	NEC MultiSync M700 monitor	NEC; 800-632-4636; $899	A-

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Spotlight, *continued from page 130*

GET 3D AND TV

ATI 3D Xpression and TV Tuner

Rating: B

As hardware 3D acceleration makes its way to the PC, two things are clear: There's no universal 3D standard yet in effect, and, nevertheless, vendors are working hard to differentiate their cards' capabilities.

ATI gets off to a good start with its **3D Xpression**, based on the company's own 3D Rage accelerator chip. This PCI card adds another dimension to the company's Mach64 line, with sharp 2D features to match its mates and drivers for every operating system this side of UNIX.

As for 3D, without an accepted standard, the main way for vendors to distinguish their products is by the bundled games optimized to run on them. Some of these titles will run on other boards without the 3D optimizations; others won't. But without being able to run games with the same optimizations on multiple cards, comparisons are more or less shooting in the dark.

For 3D Xpression, ATI enlisted MechWarrior 2 and Assault Rigs, and also included a coupon for WipeOut when an optimized 3-D version is available. ATI also throws in one CD with three sample MPEG clips and another with Vream's WIRL 3D Web browser.

Judging from the difference between MechWarrior 2 on a standard 2D card and Mech 2 on the Rage-optimized version, this card's a winner. While the standard Windows 95 version provides the crude 3D of flat-textured skies and geography, the one optimized for Rage offers clouds in perspective and comparatively rich texture mapping of terrain features, with no diminution of the game's exciting play characteristics.

For most of your DOS games, you'll have to load a TSR driver to enable you to get Super VGA graphics with the Rage. Although we couldn't run Duke Nukem in hi-res on one testing system, it worked just fine on another, as did most of the games we ran. ATI is justly proud of its software MPEG player. I found even full-screen video both smooth and incredibly sharp. In fact, this leads into the other means of differentiating 3D cards: added multimedia value.

Competitor nVidia's chipsets, for instance, provide enhanced wave audio for Windows 95. (For reviews of nVidia-based 3D boards, see Hardware Spotlight, August 1996, page 90). The 3D Xpression, on the other hand, offers a Windows interface for optional add-ons, including ATI's **TV Tuner** card ($129), which I was also able to test.

This card turns your monitor into an enhanced TV, allowing you to keep an eye on the big game in one corner of your screen. You can go full-screen, too, or connect a camcorder or VCR.

But the fun doesn't stop there. Use the video-capture utility to take snapshots and motion clips off the TV. Or combine the Hot Words feature with the card's closed-caption capability to watch TV in the background, popping the screen up when your keyword combinations come up. (ATI Technologies; 905-882-2600; www.atitech.com; $219, plus $129 for TV Tuner) *—Tom Marshall*

DSVD, *continued from page 122*

Eiger is taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to V.70. (Eiger Labs; 408-774-3456; www.eigerlabs.com; $259)

Sportster Vi 28.8

The Sportster Vi 28.8 was another promising DSVD contender, but again our hopes were dashed. When we unpacked the box and removed the anti-static pack that contained the board, we saw a sticker that warned us not to install the board before running a setup utility. The utility asked us whether we wanted to test an existing modem or have it suggest settings for a new modem, then asked whether our new modem was internal or external. After checking out our system, the utility suggested a setting of COM 3 and IRQ 5 for the new modem.

The Sportster ships with a default configuration of COM 2 and IRQ3, which meant we had to change a few jumpers. Not exactly hassle-free, but not too bad—yet. At this point, the utility updates your SYSTEM.INI file with the settings, and after testing these settings again with the utility, you should be ready to run.

The problem, though, is that this setup routine is intended for Win 3.1, not Win 95, so there's no driver-detection process involved. We had to manually set up our modem, but the Win 95 drivers that Microsoft provides don't have an option for the DSVD model. Fortunately, we were able to download a new Win 95 settings file at U.S. Robotics' Web site.

The modem worked well in non-DSVD in Win 95, but when it came to DOS games like Duke and Quake, it faltered—probably because U.S. Robotics provides no DOS installation routine. We were able to make an initial connection by running the games in Win 95 DOS windows, but as a game began, one of the systems would consistently freeze. In the end, we gave up on making it work.

U.S. Robotics is waiting until V.70 is ratified before deciding whether it will upgrade the Sportster to support the standard. (U.S. Robotics; 800-342-5877; www.usr.com; street price $179.95)

Tiger-288R

The Tiger is similar to the Commando in that it's more than just a DSVD modem; it can also function as a sound card and IDE CD-ROM controller. When you run the installation software from Windows 95, you are given a choice of installing the card as a DSVD modem, a modem with audio card, or a modem/audio card with a CD-ROM interface. We opted for the first choice and tried to load drivers from the included disk, but several times Win 95 couldn't recognize the setup files on the disk. After about 10 tries, we finally got the Tiger to install and function as a standard modem. On the second test system, we ran into several conflicts that we were able to resolve. Even so, we couldn't get the two cards to successfully connect in a game of Duke or Quake.

We came close, though, due in part to the helpful documentation: a foldout card with installation instructions and color photographs, plus a card with instructions for setting up specific games.

The Tiger also comes with the Navigator software program, which is supposed to give you DSVD connectivity in DOS without having to mess with initialization strings. To use it, one person calls the other and then they both launch the Navigator program from DOS. Some games, such as Descent, reportedly work only with this option.

Shark Multimedia also bundles a standup microphone with the board. The company says that it plans to support V.70 when it is ratified with a hardware upgrade for the Tiger. (Shark Multimedia; 800-800-3321; www.sharkmm.com; $199) ■

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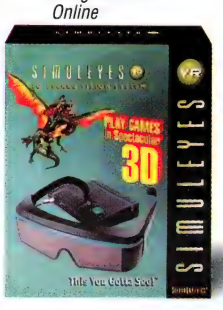

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By Patrick Marshall

S.O.S.

Unlocking expanded memory for your games, cleaning up the Win 95 Start menu, and mousing around in DOS.

Expanded Horizons

I have a 486 with 8MB of RAM. My problem is that I can't run certain games because they say I have no "expanded memory." I didn't even know that I was supposed to have expanded memory. How can I get some?

Marc Scholl
Carlisle, PA

If you've got 8MB of RAM, you've certainly got enough memory to use some of it as expanded memory. Before I show you how to do that, let's go over the different types of system memory. The first 640KB of memory in your system is called "conventional memory" because it's the only memory directly identified as user memory by DOS. In the old days, all programs had to run within the confines of that 640KB.

The next 360KB of memory, called "upper memory," is reserved for DOS to use in managing hardware devices. And there's another small 64KB chunk of memory known as "high memory." All additional memory you add beyond that first megabyte will be configured as "extended memory" unless you have a utility loaded to configure it as expanded memory. Games and other applications can be stored and run in extended memory, though DOS itself cannot directly access this memory. On the other hand, data—but not programs—can be stored in memory that is configured as expanded memory.

To configure your system to offer expanded memory to games that need it, run the MEMMAKER utility that comes with DOS 6.x, and when it asks if any programs you use need expanded memory, answer yes. MEMMAKER will lead you through modifying your CONFIG.SYS file to load the expanded memory manager software.

Take Control

How do I delete items in the Windows 95 Control Panel and on the menus that pop up when you click on the Start button? Specifically, I want to get rid of the Document folder and icons in the Control Panel, including the Internet one.

Jim Juneau
jjuneau@juno.com

I've got an easy answer for you: You don't. The Control Panel and its contents are considered part of the Windows 95 operating system, and there is no way to remove any of the icons or the utilities that lie behind them. The same is true of the Start menu, with the sole exception of programs. There are actually a couple of ways to remove programs from the Start menu, but I've found that the easiest is to right-click on the Start button, then select Open from the menu that pops up. You'll then see a window that lists all the program folders and icons contained in the Start menu. Select any item by right-clicking on it, choose Delete, and it's history.

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVEN W. FLEURY

Man or Mouse?

When I run DOS games in DOS mode under Windows, the games don't load the mouse driver. Generally, the games don't even start because the driver isn't loaded. How can I load my mouse driver in DOS?

Dennis J. Gallegos
djgall@juno.com

If you were running straight DOS as your operating system, you would generally load the mouse driver in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file. The software that comes with the mouse usually provides drivers and an installation routine that will lead you through setting them up to load automatically when your system boots. With Windows, things work a bit differently. You don't say which version of Windows you're running, but judging from your problem, I'd wager that you're using Windows 3.1 or Windows for Workgroups. Those versions provide their own mouse drivers for Windows but do nothing for DOS. To have a mouse work when you're in a DOS window, you need to make sure that you load the DOS mouse driver before you load Windows. The specific commands for loading your mouse driver vary depending on the brand of mouse, but the installation software that comes with the mouse should take care of modifying your AUTOEXEC.BAT to load the driver automatically at bootup.

Disk Woes

Recently, while playing a game of Tony La Russa Baseball 3, there was a power surge. At first I didn't think anything was wrong, but now when I attempt to defragment my hard drive with the Disk Defragmenter, it locks up. My D: drive, the one Tony La Russa Baseball 3 and Windows 95 reside on, is the only one affected. When I defragment my C: drive, everything is fine, but when I try to do my D: drive, it continually locks up once it reaches 10% completion. I've tried everything I can think of but cannot get it to work. What could be causing this problem?

Chris Herman
cherman@eagle.wbm.ca

Are you sure you didn't install any other programs since your last defrag session? And does your hard-drive light keep going on and off even though the defrag utility appears to be hung up? Some programs, particularly disk and file managers such as Norton Desktop for Windows, do things to your disk structure that take Windows' Disk Defragmenter a while to "figure out" prior to defragging.

continued on page 136

It seems like everyone these days is throwing together some plastic handles with a few buttons and passing them off as joysticks. But I'm a serious gamer. When I want a joystick, I look for a real one. From CH Products.

F-16 FighterStick

The engineers will tell you CH joysticks are better because of things like potentiometers rated to 2 million cycles, triggers rated to 10 million shots and a rotational life of up to 5 million cycles. The marketing folks point out how CH joysticks and track-balls have been used for 20 years in medical instruments, robotics, games: even movie special effects.

ANYBODY CAN MAKE A GOOD JOYSTICK. YEAH, AND I'M THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND.

But gamers like me know CH joysticks just feel right and work better. They're made here in the USA, and come with a great warranty. CH joysticks seem to last forever, too. And believe me, it's no fun when a wannabe joystick goes south in the heat of battle.

I know the royal run-around when I see it. So when somebody tries to sell me an anybody-can-make-one-of-these joysticks, I tell him to keep it. I'm hanging on to my CH.

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3DO	14-15	Goosebump Graphics	142	Microsoft	82
Acclaim	80-81	Graphic Simulations	121	Microsoft (Deadly Tides)	65
Acclaim (Magic)	105	Grolier	27	Mindscape (Azrael's Tear)	123
Acclaim	127	GT Interactive (AMOK)	111	Mindscape (MegaRace)	95
Acclaim (Striker)	93	GT Interactive (9)	40-41	New World Computing	7
Activision (Interstate 76)	54-55	GTE Entertainment (NCAA)	103	New World Computing (Wages of War)	125
Activision (Mech 2: Mercenaries)	20-21	GTE Entertainment (Timelapse)	24-25	Nova Logic	4-5
Activision (Time Commando)	117	GTE Entertainment (Titanic)	53	Nova Media Group	142
Activision (Zork)	11	Inscape (ONK)	113	Philips	89
American Softworks	47	Interplay (Blood and Magic)	74-75	Philips	101
Bethesda (Daggerfall)	107	Interplay (Mummy)	91	Philips	87
Bethesda (SkyNET)	51	Interplay (Shattered Steel)	23	Philips (Absolute Garbage)	61-63
Blizzard	70-71	Interplay (Starfleet)	39	Private USA	142
CD-ROM Access	140	Konicom	142	Pulse Entertainment	C5
CH Products	135	L&L Technologies	142	R&G Games	140
Columbia House	9	LucasArts	131	Rocket Science	85
Creative Labs	C6	Maxis	13	SSI	97
Crown Communication	143	Microforum (Huygen's)	109	SSI (Ages of Rifles)	137
Cyber Dream	115	Microforum (Soul Trap)	129	Stereographics	133
Cyrix	140	Microprose (Magic)	67	United CD-ROM	140 & 143
FormGen	C2-P1	Microprose (Master of Orion)	119	Viacom (Death Drone)	28-29
FormGen	31	Microsoft	32-33	Viacom (Slamscape)	69
FormGen (Space Dude)	99	Microsoft	76	Warner Books	59

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TECH SHOP *continued from page 134*

While it's figuring things out, the utility may be working even though it isn't showing movement on the progress indicator. If you can see that the hard drive light is still flicking on and off, just be patient and let Defrag finish its business. If the light's not flicking, it's possible that your system crash resulted in file corruption that the SCANDISK utility isn't picking up. If you haven't already backed up any files you want to keep on drive D:, I'd do so now. Then reformat the drive and start fresh.

Best Upgrades

I have a 486DX2 with 8MB of RAM, and everything else is up to date. What should I invest my money in: RAM or a better processor?
Jonathan Miller
Houston, TX

A Which fork in the road you take depends on a lot of factors. Here are a few rules of thumb for those considering upgrading.

• The most cost-effective upgrade depends on what you do with your computer. If you're crunching numbers in a spreadsheet, the difference between a 486/66 and a Pentium 100 can be immense. But if you're playing DOS-based games, you'll get a lot more performance boost for the dollar by investing in a faster video card or additional RAM. (It's worth noting, however, that almost all of the hottest new games, like Quake, require a Pentium system.)

• The key to effective upgrading is to eliminate bottlenecks. So, if you've got a 486/66 with 16MB of RAM and an old VGA card, it's probably the card that's slowing you down the most.

• That said, take a look at the minimum and recommended requirements for the games you'd like to play. Those listings should tip you off as to where your system is falling short.

Fax, mail, or e-mail your queries to the S.O.S. staff at:
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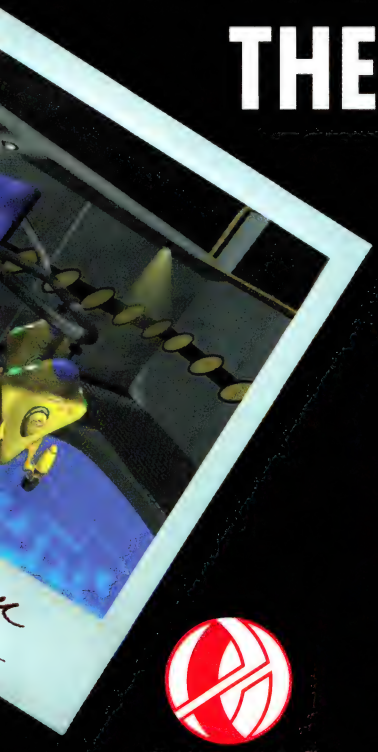

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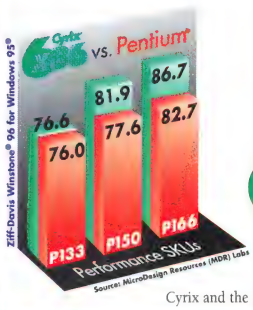

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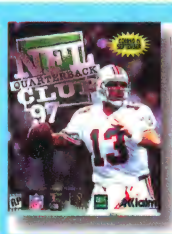

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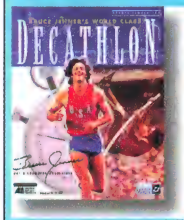

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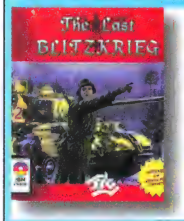

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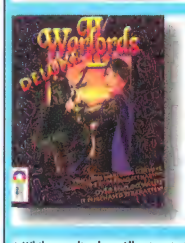

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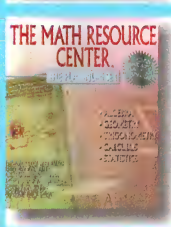

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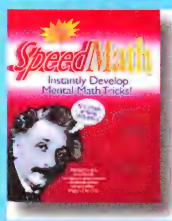

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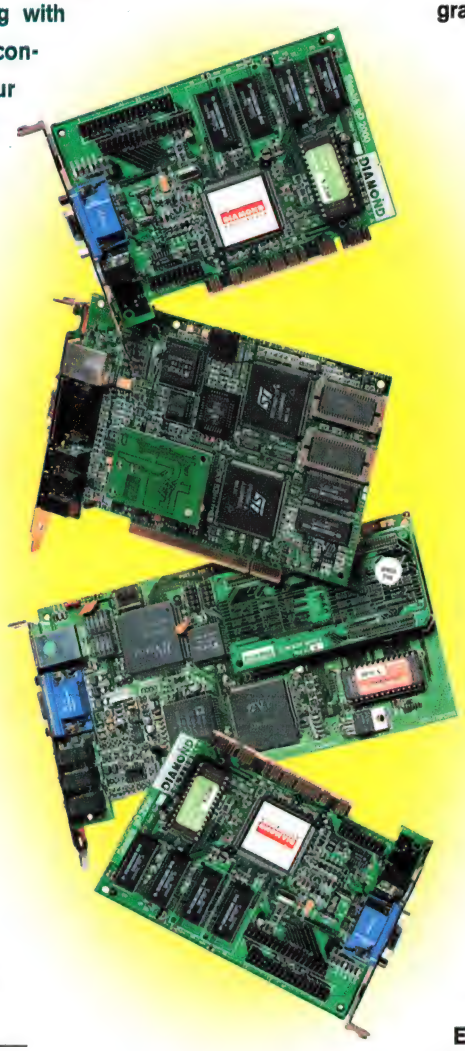

1. Are you planning to buy a 3D graphics card in the next six months?

A. Yes
B. No

If yes, why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If no, why not? And when might you consider upgrading to one?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What are the most important factors to you when considering a 3D card?

A. Price
B. Graphics chip used
C. Games bundled with the card
D. Games compatible with the card
E. Other_____

3. How much are you willing to pay for a 3D graphics card?

A. Less than $100
B. $100 to $199
C. $200 to $300
D. Money is no object

4. Are you planning to buy a combination 2D/3D card that replaces your current video board, or a 3D "pass-through" card that works alongside your existing video board?

A. Combo 2D/3D
B. 3D-only

5. What games are you most looking forward to playing in 3D?

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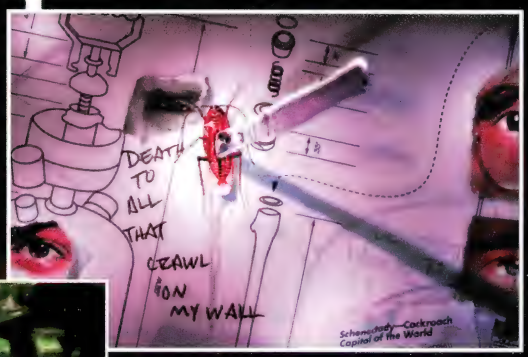

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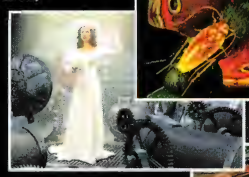

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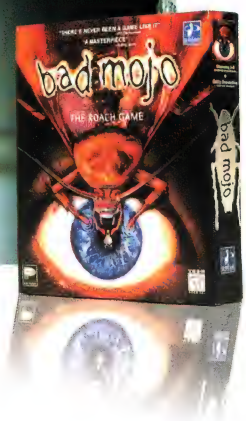

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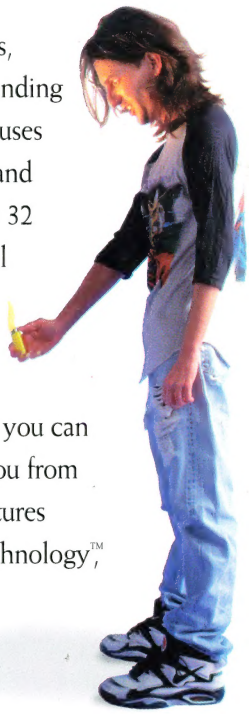

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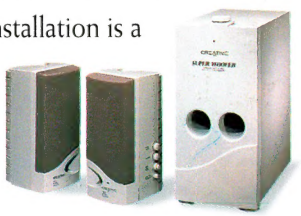

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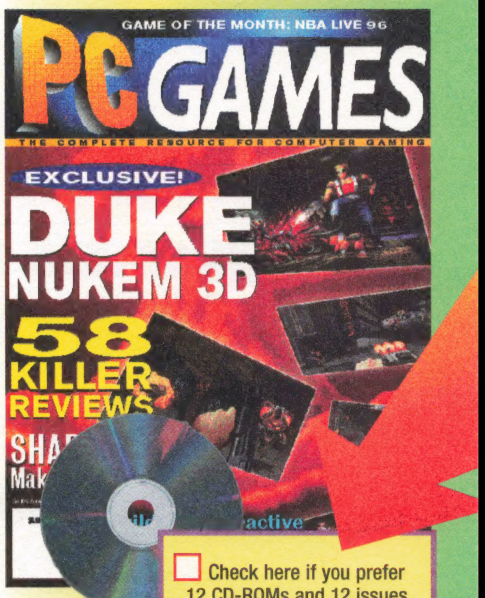

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